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THE BOOK OF JONAH.



THE BOOK OF JONAH:

ILLUSTRATED BY

DISCOVERIES AT NINEVEH.

BY

THE REV. P. S. DESPREZ; B.D.

*Author of "The Apocalypse Fulfilled in the Consummation of the
Mosaic Economy and the Coming of the Son of Man."*

*"Babylon the Great neither Rome, Pagan
nor Papal, but Jerusalem," &c.*

"Truth shall spring out of the earth."—Psalm lxxxv. 11.



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TO
T. SOTHERON ESTCOURT, ESQ., M.P.,
IN SINCERE ADMIRATION
OF HIS UNWEARIED AND GENEROUS EFFORTS
FOR THE
AMELIORATION OF THE CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL
LABOURERS OF THE COUNTY OF WILTS,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS, BY PERMISSION,
DEDICATED
BY HIS OBLIGED SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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JONAH'S MISSION.

“Behold Jonah preached in Nineveh,
A Jew among the wicked.
That mighty one ascended to the city,
And disturbed it with words of terror.
The heathen city was made sorrowful,
By means of the Hebrew preacher.”

*From the Syriac of Ephraem Syrus, by the
Rev. H. Burgess, Ph. D.*

LECTURE I.

“Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city. and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”—Jonah i. 1, 2.

ONE of the chief features of the age in which we live is freedom of inquiry, and if that is not fairly met, a tendency to scepticism and unbelief. This is the peculiar complexion of our times. Men were never less disposed to believe in the marvellous and supernatural, or even, we regret to say, in the accredited miracles of the gospel, than now. There is a disposition abroad to search and sift every thing to the bottom, and if rightly directed, that disposition may prove the greatest blessing to mankind. Assertion is

not now received instead of proof, nor is assumption generally taken in lieu of argument, and to advance that which you cannot substantiate by evidence is to weaken your cause. While there is much talk about religion, there is beneath the surface of society a deep undercurrent of dark and troubled thought, a restless spirit of investigation, an uneasy sense of doubt, and a conscious dissatisfaction in existing creeds either secretly cherished or openly avowed. In a day like our own, when infidelity rears a bold and unblushing front, when the truth of the Scriptures is openly assailed as well as covertly denied, when the friends of religion defend her with feeble, because ill-chosen, weapons, drawn more often from the quiver of their own imagination than the armoury of God's word, it would be a great thing if some *new* evidence could be adduced to silence the sneers of the sceptic, and the philosophy, "falsely so called" of the infidel; we repeat, it would be a great thing if, in an enquiring age like this, facts could be brought forward of an hitherto unheard-of kind, sufficiently powerful to paralyse infidelity, and to demonstrate the veracity of Revelation. Such

we humbly conceive is the nature of the proof which it will be the object of these lectures to adduce. It is new, powerful, and convincing. It is like the finding of some original manuscript hid for ages, which clears up in an instant mysteries long concealed in darkness and obscurity; or like the development of some new principle in science, which resolves the nature of those causes which have hitherto been only traceable by their effects. What the discovery of the circulation of the blood may have been to the knowledge of the economy of the human frame, or the adjustment of the solar system to astronomical science, such we conceive is the application of this new principle to the elucidation of Holy Writ. It was the thing wanted in a sceptical age; the refutation to infidelity so greatly desired. The answer, we humbly trust, the complete answer to "the fool, who saith in his heart there is no God."

We shall make no further apology for introducing as our subject, *The Book of Jonah, illustrated by discoveries at Nineveh*, to the serious consideration of our readers, and in this introductory lecture shall confine our observations to

a few particulars respecting the prophet himself, and the great city to which he was sent.

Jonah, the son of Amittai, flourished in the reign of Jeroboam, the second, A.C. 825. This Jeroboam must not be confounded with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the author of Israel's apostacy, whose name is handed down to posterity under the unenviable title of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." He was simply a prince of the same name, and, it would also appear, of the same character, for it is written of him, that "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." The prophet Jonah appears to have been contemporary with this king, as we learn from 2 Kings xiv. 25. "He (Jeroboam) restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake, by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath Hepher." Josephus throws much light upon this passage; he says, "Now one Jonah, a prophet, foretold to him (Jeroboam) that he should make war with the Syrians, and conquer their army, and enlarge the bounds of

his kingdom on the northern parts to the city of Hamath; and on the southern to the lake Asphaltitis; so Jeroboam made an expedition against the Syrians, and overran their country as Jonah had foretold." (Jos. Antiq. lii. 10.) This statement of Josephus, filling up as it does an important omission of the Scriptures respecting Jonah, is extremely valuable. We learn from it that this prophet was the divinely appointed teacher of Israel in the days of the second Jeroboam, and that in consequence of his predictions an expedition was undertaken against the Syrians, which resulted in the aggrandizement of the coasts of Israel.

The native place of Jonah was Gath Hopher—an obscure village in the tribe of Zebulun, the country afterwards known by the name of Galilee; so little remarkable for the sending forth of great men, that in our Lord's time its insignificance had passed into a proverb, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth," "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

Of the Book which bears his name no certainty can be affirmed respecting the author; possibly, it was written by Jonah himself; if so,

the fidelity with which he records his own failings is a strong argument in its favour. What man writing only for fame, would have been anxious to hand down to posterity a tale reflecting disgrace on himself? What mere secular writer would have recorded his impetuosity like Moses, his adultery like David, or his disobedience like Jonah? On the other hand the faithfulness with which inspired men have chronicled their faults as well as their virtues, is no mean evidence of the truth of their narratives. This circumstance would lead us to conjecture that the prophet himself must have been the author, for whilst the book is a record of his miraculous preservation, and of his success as a preacher, it is also a memorial of his inhumanity and his disobedience.

We would further observe, respecting the book of Jonah, that it does not occupy its proper chronological place in the Scriptures. As we have already seen, Jonah is spoken of in 2 Kings xiv., and surely the prophecy should have preceded the mention of the prophet in the historical books! The same thing may be said of the Book of Micah, which ought to come before


the prophecy of Jeremiah, in which it is alluded to ; also of the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and all the prophets, Malachi excepted, which ought to precede the histories of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Much mischief is caused by this misarrangement of the books of the Old Testament, and many difficulties would admit of an easy solution had proper attention been paid to the chronological order which they ought to occupy.

We must also stop to answer the objection, that the book of Jonah is merely an allegory. This has already been done in part, when it was shown that the prophetic character of Jonah was not confined solely to his mission to Nineveh but that he was the appointed teacher of Israel in the days of Jeroboam.


Added to this, our Lord has so interwoven the principal features of Jonah's history with his own, that the record of this Old Testament prophet, and that of the greatest of all prophets must stand or fall together. He declared that he would give no other sign to the evil and adulterous generation of his day, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. It is remarkable that no other prophet was ever brought forward by our

Lord *as a sign*. Moses saw the prophetic character of the Saviour through a vista of 1,500 years, and said of him, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken." David spake of the resurrection of Christ that, "his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." Isaiah predicted his sufferings and the glories that should follow. But Jonah was prophetic not only in word but in deed: the only sign which Messiah gave to the Jews to show that he was sent from God.

It appears that great doubt existed in the mind of the Jewish nation whether Jesus was the Christ or not. On one occasion they come to him and ask, "How long makest thou us to doubt, if thou be the Christ tell us plainly." At another time the high priest puts to him the solemn interrogatory, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God?" With a view of solving this doubt, the Scribes and Pharisees ask him for a sign, "But he answered and said unto them; an evil and adulterous generation



seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas, for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. xii. 38, 39, 40.) Previous messengers from the Almighty had established their divine mission by signs. Moses had thus proved himself to be sent from God. "The Lord said unto him, what is that in thine hand? and he said, a rod; and he said, cast it on the ground; and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses fled from before it; and the Lord said unto Moses put forth thine hand and take it by the tail; and he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand. And the Lord said furthermore unto him, put now thine hand into thy bosom, and he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold his hand was leprous as snow; and he said put thine hand into thy bosom again, and he put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom, and behold it was turned again as his other flesh." These were the signs by which Moses was to establish



his mission, and of which God said unto him, "It shall come to pass if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign." (Exodus iv. 2-8.)

Our Lord, on the contrary, gave them no new sign, but referred them to one with which, it may be supposed, every Jew was familiar, and *that*, he said, should be the sign of the prophet Jonas.

It will be interesting to mark a few particulars in which the sign answers to its counter-sign.

Jonah's situation when he was cast alive into the belly of the fish was *a new thing*. No similar event ever occurred in the history of man. The account was never before heard, of a human being swallowed up by one of the monsters of the deep and vomited out again upon the dry land; and had not the story been found in the Book of God we might have rejected it as the fabrication of romance, or the wild imaginings of some fairy tale.

The resurrection of our Lord, the counter-sign, was also *a new thing*. There is no other

similar fact on record. It was calculated by its novelty to impress the world most deeply, and it has so impressed it, for the resurrection of Christ is the distinguishing feature of Christianity. True, others had been raised from the dead before—three under the old dispensation, five under the new—but these all rose from the dead to die again, to prolong their pilgrimage for a while, and then to return to corruption. The novelty in the case of our Lord's resurrection was this—"Christ being raised from the dead *dieth no more.*" It is the only event of the kind in the records of creation. Distinct from the miracles of Moses or Elijah, or even from the other miracles of the Saviour, it stands out alone and unique, a new thing in the history of the world.

Another point of resemblance between the sign and the countersign is *the distress of each in the prospect of temporary death.* We can liken Jonah's incarceration to nothing else than to the case of some person buried alive,—a circumstance by no means impossible in countries where interment takes place a few hours after death, and where corruption, that true test of

dissolution, is not waited for,—shut up in some massy sepulchre, against which he might strain his heaving chest and thrust his powerless arms in vain and convulsive efforts for escape, and shriek for mercy unheard and unheeded till he sank down at last in his living grave in the utter hopelessness of despair. Such we may suppose was the situation of the prophet. Well might he call it, “The belly of hell;” well might he say, “Thou hast brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.”

Turn now to the countersign, so harmoniously fitting in all its parts. We cannot but conclude that the thought of death was a subject full of distressing considerations to the Son of God. We remember how he shrank from it in the days of his flesh with instinctive horror, and how his human weakness rebelled against his divine will. Thus he was wont to say, “Mine hour is not yet come.” “I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” “Can ye drink (said he to his two ambitious followers) of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” and when the hour had

indeed come, the anticipation of which had filled him with so much dread, he bade the traitor do his work with a friendly speed and put him out of his pain, "That thou doest, do quickly." But the mind shrinks from the mysteriousness of the contact between "him which had the power of death," and the Author and Prince of Life; between the king of Hades and the "King of kings" which had "the keys of hell and of death."

To this let it be added that not only was the period of the entombment of Jonah in the whale's belly of the same duration as that of our Lord in the heart of the earth, but a further resemblance is established from the fact that during the three days and three nights of their incarceration *neither Jonah nor our Lord saw corruption*. Jonah says of himself, "Thou hast brought my life again from corruption." David says of Christ, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Here again the sign harmonizes completely with the countersign. No other human being but Jonah could represent our Lord. All who have died, or who having been raised from the dead, have lived to die

again, have seen corruption. Of Jonah alone of the whole human race could it be said that for three days and three nights he died, as it were, in the belly of the fish, and rose again the third day not having seen corruption. In the particulars, therefore, which we have enumerated—that the entombment of the prophet was a new thing unheard of before or since in the history of mankind—that the period of its duration extended over three days and three nights—and that during that time, although shut up in “the belly of hell,” he saw no corruption; Jonah was not simply a remarkable type of our Lord, *but the only corresponding sign furnished by the Scriptures*. All this gives a circumstantial reality to the history we are about to consider, and impresses it with the stamp of truth—it entwines the prophetic narrative with the doctrines of Christianity, and places it upon an equal basis with regard to credibility—so that to sneer at the Book of Jonah as an allegorical representation, or to cavil at the extraordinary interposition of Divine Providence of which the prophet was the object, is to cast a doubt upon the authenticated miracles of the gospel as well

as upon the positive declarations of the Redeemer of mankind.

With this brief notice of the life and writings of Jonah, we pass on to speak of the city to which he was sent.

Nineveh, great and wondrous city—monarch of a hundred lands—sovereign of a thousand tribes—lady of the eastern world, who saidst in thine heart, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”

Nineveh, great and wondrous city—gigantic skeleton of past magnificence—superb ruin of departed glory—whose “crowned were as the locusts, and whose throne was among the stars.” Great in antiquity—great in wickedness—great in desolation; henceforth thou shalt be great as the champion of truth—great, as the evidence that the word of God is not the sleight and invention of men—great, as the gauntlet thrown down to infidelity, which none of her mailed sons shall dare to lift—great, as the challenge struck on the sceptic’s shield with the sharp spear of eternal truth, daring and defying him to mortal combat. From beneath thy mounds, I hear a sound reverberating along the palaces of Senna-

cherib, that truth must prevail. From under thy grass-grown ramparts I catch the echo of a voice, proclaiming that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In thy defaced and ruined temples, and in the calcined dust and fragments of thy once glorious structures, I read the hand of a just and righteous God, and thou dost come out of the sepulchre where, for 3000 years thou hast lain entombed, with the majesty of a resurrection from the dead, to "confound the liars, and to make the diviners mad," and to rejoice and establish the hearts of the Israel of God.

It need scarcely be said that no inconsiderable portion of this great city, whose history occupies so prominent a place in Scripture, has been dug out of its grave; and that not only does there not exist a shadow of a doubt that the recovered city is the Nineveh of the Bible, but, to enhance the discovery, the records of the city have been exhumed with the city itself, and these, imperfectly deciphered as they are at present, are yet sufficiently understood to make us aware that many of the transactions therein recorded are confirmatory of events of which the Bible speaks.

It would seem impossible to exaggerate the importance of this discovery, which may justly be reckoned amongst the most conclusive evidences of the truth which have ever been vouchsafed to man.


The proof, moreover, has appeared at the right time, and in the right age. He who orders all things well, has provided that these discoveries should not be made before the minds of men were prepared to receive them, or to appreciate their value. Had the covering of buried Nineveh been rolled away in the palmy days of Greece and Rome, where would have been the unbelievers to whom these treasures would have confirmed the truth of the word of God? Had they been made in the dim twilight of the mediæval ages, where would have been the intellects to decipher these uncovered tablets, or to have estimated their importance when deciphered? But in our day and generation—the day of rapidly-spreading light and knowledge, of enquiry and research as well as of doubt and distrust, the Providence of God has ordained that truth should literally *spring up out of the earth*—that the ruins of this magni-

ficent dynasty should be brought to light—the sepulchre of Nineveh be opened—the stone rolled away from the door—the napkin unbound from the face—the grave-clothes unwrapped from the form—and the skeleton city rise out of its grave.

We remember, as a child, to have formed the wish that only one chariot or shield might be dragged up from the depths of the Red Sea, to confirm the miserable discomfiture of the Egyptians, and the salvation of the hosts of Israel; or that only one relic might be rescued from the leaden waters which are said to roll over the impious cities of the plain, and then the sacred narrative should never more be doubted, and we should be able to place the most implicit confidence in the truth of God's holy word. It may be that wishes akin to these have been entertained by intellects of larger growth and more matured powers. These desires may be abundantly gratified. Not simply a chariot or a shield but a whole city has been rescued from the oblivion of ages, and the cold and silent marbles of Assyria, now in the museums of Europe, are not only a memorial

of perished races and of their departed glory, but of the veracity of that Record which liveth and abideth for ever.

Turn we now to a few particulars respecting the city to which Jonah was sent. It is described by the prophet as "an exceeding great city (Heb. a great city unto God) of three days' journey." Some have supposed this to allude to the distance usually performed by pedestrians in a day. Its dimensions, as given by Diodorus Siculus, were 150 stadia on the two longest sides of the quadrangle, and 90 on the opposite, the square being 480 stadia or about 60 miles; allowing 20 miles as one day's journey of the prophet, the circumference would correspond with the 60 miles of the historian. Ephraem Syrus says, "that the three days' journey does not allude to the length of the city, but that in that time the preaching of Jonah had pervaded the whole of it; on the first day it reached the ears of the people, on the second the nobles, and the third the king and all his servants." The exact size is very immaterial. In forming a notion, however, of this great city we must dismiss ideas founded on compactly built European



cities, and must understand that Nineveh was, as many eastern cities are to this day, a collection of buildings interspersed with green pastures and extensive gardens. It is expressly said that it contained "much cattle." Of Babylon it is said by Quintus Curtius that there was space enough within it to cultivate corn for the population in case of siege. And the reason of this is obvious. An ancient city like Nineveh, surrounded by a high and strong wall, could only be taken by famine, and to guard against this it was necessary to include the means of rearing cattle and providing vegetable produce, and perhaps corn, within the walls.

Let us now enquire if modern research corroborates the biblical statement of the size of ancient Nineveh?

In the midst of an immense plain on the banks of the Tigris the traveller has observed for centuries high mounds, covered in the wet season with verdure, and in the summer with drifting sand. These, till lately, have been mistaken for natural ridges, and have scarcely been noticed. Niebuhr passed over them

without perceiving any traces of ancient Nineveh, mistaking its grass-covered rampart of brick and earth for a natural ridge. An English traveller remarks, "now it is destroyed as God foretold it should be, by the Chaldæans, being nothing else than a sepulchre of itself. (Compare Nahum i. 14. "I will dig thy grave for thou art vile"). Greek and Roman, Parthian and Persian, Tartar and Arab have traversed these mounds with stolid indifference, no guardian spirit of the spot whispering the words :—

"Stop! for thy tread is on an empire's dust;
A nation's spoil lies sepulchred below."

No hapless ship, sinking into the abyss of swallowing waves, ever more completely vanished from the fields of ocean, than did this mighty city from the ken and knowledge of living men. For three thousand years the spot was unknown where Nineveh once stood. No memorials of a perished race, no traces of former civilization, seemed to give evidence that the soil had once teemed with busy life, and had been tenanted by swarming millions. All was still and silent as the grave—no voice broke the sleep of death—

no hand sought to clear away the accumulated mass of sand and rubbish forming the sepulchre of the buried capital; and the only sign of life was the rapid flow of the arrowy Tigris, mocking the dead city; the music of its waves in their ceaseless career, calling upon the corpse of Nineveh to come up out of its grave, contrasting sublimely the ephemeral character of the things of man, with the enduring majesty of the works of God.

By the activity and enterprise of our countryman, Mr. Layard, these mounds have been partially excavated, and it appears that they contain the relics of this great Assyrian city: that beneath this heap of drifted sand and earth lie hid the remains of palaces, halls, and temples, containing works of art in admirable preservation, and monuments and records of the most ancient and interesting empire in the world. The way in which these ruins were discovered seems very providential. "The French consul at Mosul, after some opposition from the inhabitants, was permitted to sink a well in the mound. At a small distance from the surface they came to the top of a wall, which they

found to be constructed of sculptured slabs ; he directed a wider trench to be carried in the direction of the wall, and he soon found that he had opened a chamber covered with sculptured representations of battles, sieges, and similar events. His wonder may be easily imagined ; a new history had been suddenly opened to him ; he had discovered an Assyrian edifice, the first, probably, which had been exposed to the view of man since the fall of the Assyrian Empire." From this small beginning, these discoveries have been carried on to a much greater extent. Mr. Layard says, speaking of the palace of Sennacherib, " In this magnificent edifice I had opened no less than seventy-one halls, chambers, and passages, whose walls, almost without an exception, had been panelled with slabs of sculptured alabaster, recording the wars, the triumphs, and the great deeds of the Assyrian king. By a rough calculation about 9880 feet, or nearly two miles of bas-reliefs, with twenty-seven portals formed by colossal winged bulls and lion-sphinxes were discovered on that part alone of the building explored during my researches." Since that time great additions have

been made to these discoveries by Sir Henry Rawlinson and others. "The pickaxe," we are told, "had hardly been used when walls were found cropping through the soil. A suite of chambers was soon traced out, and in the course of a few weeks the workmen had uncovered a spacious palace with a perfect labyrinth of halls, corridors, and passages, all richly sculptured throughout." [Journal of Sacred Literature, July, 1856.]

At this moment there are more specimens of Assyrian architecture in the British Museum, than room in which to place them; and it is highly probable that much of these enormous structures is still underground, and hidden from the eye of man.

Such is the result of the application of modern research to the Word of God. The Bible speaks of a city, mighty and powerful, exercising its iron dominion over the nations, three thousand years ago. That city disappeared, and for twenty-five centuries its very locality was unknown: in our days, phoenix-like, it lifts itself from its ashes, to enter upon a new and revived existence.

It is not many years since the ruins of what was thought to be an ancient British church were discovered in the sand on the coast of Cornwall. From the style of architecture it was conjectured that the building must have lain hid from a period previous to the introduction of the Roman Catholic religion into this country. A book has been written about it, entitled, "Peranzabuloe, or the lost church found," the object of which is to show that a simple form of worship existed in this country previous to the mission of St. Augustine. Supposing this to be correct (and, if capable of proof, the argument would be irresistible), consider, we pray you, on what vantage ground you stand with regard to this buried city. Half an hour's walk from this spot will put you in possession of indisputable evidence, not only that Nineveh existed, but that the Nineveh of the British Museum is the Nineveh of the Bible. You shall not merely read in a book, or hear from a pulpit or lecture room, of the aggressive character of its warlike sovereigns, its debasing worship, its revolting superstition, its abominable cruelties, its lordly dominion, but your eyes

shall behold the Monarchs of Assyria, their chariots and their horsemen, as they went forth, "conquering and to conquer;" shall gaze on the fit emblems of its majestic power in the firmly planted feet of those gigantic bulls, which seem as if they could crush a world beneath their tread; nay, more, you shall read in the records of this superb dynasty, that the Bible is not a lie, and that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Spirit of the Most High. Yes, there it is—not the mere legend of some miraculous event, of which the witnesses have perished—not the creation of fancy, or some Arabian night's entertainment—but hard, solid, eternal truth, firm and durable as its magnificent memorials, attesting research and science to be the handmaids of Revelation, and demonstrating that Holy Book which tells us of a blessed Redeemer to be the Word of God.

In subsequent lectures we hope to enter more into detail, and to show in what particulars these interesting discoveries confirm the statements of Scripture. Enough, however, has been said to establish the existence of a principle which, applied to the elucidation of the

sacred volume is capable of producing important results. Nor have we cause to fear that science and investigation will prove the enemies of religion. To climb the stars with the Astrologer—to cleave the bowels of the earth with the Geologist—to ransack dusty tomes with the Historian—or to excavate the buried treasures of extinct empires with the Traveller—is neither to exhaust nor to injure Revelation. Religion that will not bear the strictest scrutiny is unworthy of the name, and to that ordeal we may fearlessly commit that sacred volume, which has “God for its author, salvation for its object, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its contents.”



JONAH'S DISOBEDIENCE.



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vites,
Israel
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of his

“Jonah fled from God,
And the Ninevites from holiness.
Justice placed them in fetters,
Yea both of them like criminals.
They offered repentance to her,
And were both delivered.
She preserved Jonah in the Sea,
And the Ninevites in the midst of the dry land.”

*From the Syriac of Ephraem Syrus. By the
Rev. H. Burgess, Ph. D.*

LECTURE II.

“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa ; and he found a ship going to Tarshish ; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.”—Jonah i. 3, 4.

ATTENTION was directed in our previous lecture to a few details respecting the life and writings of Jonah and the city to which he was sent. Of the prophet himself we took occasion to remark that he is not to be regarded as connected solely with his embassy to the Ninevites, but that he was the accredited teacher of Israel in the days of the second Jeroboam. We then drew an argument for the truthfulness of his

history from the fidelity with which he records his faults as well as his success ; meeting at the same time the objection of the supposed allegorical character of the book, by the fact, that the prophet is not only spoken of as a real character by our Lord, but especially singled out as the only sign which should be given to that "evil and adulterous generation." Thence we naturally came to the consideration of that great city which was the object of his mission : a city great in antiquity, wickedness, and desolation, but pre-eminently great as affording the most powerful confirmation of the truth of Holy Scripture which this or any preceding age can supply. This we conceive to be the real use of these interesting discoveries. Had Cæsar never written his Commentaries, we should, notwithstanding, have had abundant proof that the Romans once held possession of Britain, from the circumstance that Roman coins bearing the superscription of the reigning emperor, Roman tessellated pavements, and Roman camps, have been found from time to time in England ; coupled with the fact that Roman names are still attached to various localities. But accom-

panied as his narrative is by indubitable evidence of Roman dominion in this country, dug out of the soil or obtained from other sources, the proof amounts to demonstration. So with our exhumed city. It assures us of the existence of the Nineveh of the Bible, as decisively as these relics prove the conquest of this island by the Romans; and before the infidel can indulge one scoff against the supposed improbabilities of Revelation, he must show that the mounds on the bank of the Tigris do not contain the ashes of lost Nineveh, and that upon the tablets found in these subterranean chambers are not chronicled the records of transactions of which the Bible speaks.

For the sake of perspicuity we divide our present subject into

1. *The act of disobedience.*

2. *The causes which may have induced it.*

1. The act of disobedience.—“The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me; but Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and

went down to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." Jonah i. 1-2-3.

Commentators are not agreed respecting the situation of Tarshish. Some have supposed it to be Tartessus in Spain, whither the Phœnicians traded, and that Jonah sailed in one of these Phœnician vessels. Josephus tells us that it was Tarsus in Cilicia, a maritime city of some importance on the Mediterranean, afterwards known as the birth-place of St. Paul, and described by the apostle as "no mean city." We see no cause to question the statement of Josephus that "He (Jonah) went not (to Nineveh) out of fear; nay he run away from God to the city of Joppa, and finding a ship there he went into it and sailed to *Tarsus to Cilicia*." (Jos. Antiq.) From very early times there seems to have been a considerable trade between Tarshish and Joppa. "Jehosaphat," we are told, "made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold." These ships were probably called "ships of Tarshish," because

Tarshish was the principal maritime town on the Mediterranean where they were built; just as we should call ships of a certain class and size "Indiamen." We must not, however, entertain the idea that the vessel of Jonah bore any comparison with our leviathans of the deep; in all probability it was only a small rowing boat; it is expressly said in the history, "they *rowed* hard to bring it to the land." Such galleys as these, propelled by rowers sitting on benches, are depicted on the sculptures of Nineveh. They were mere coasting vessels; for sailors at that time, and indeed at a much later period, only thought themselves safe when hugging the shore.

The object of Jonah in sailing to Tarshish appears to have been "to flee from the presence of the Lord." Possibly, he considered his prophetic office, connected solely with his mission to Israel, and supposed that by escaping to a foreign country he might avoid the responsibility placed upon him. Vain hope! "Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" In the depths

of the Mediterranean or in the palaces of Nineveh he was as near to Omnipresence as by the lake of Galilee, or on the mountains of Gath-hepher. If it be true that there is no such thing as a vacuum in nature, it may with equal certainty be affirmed that there is no place where God is not. This sublime lesson of Deity every where, is forced upon the reluctant messenger by the heaven-sent tempest which arrests his course. "The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." That moment of indescribable terror came upon the prophet and his companions, which has been so often and so nobly borne by many a son of our sea-girt isle, when the cry "All lost—to prayers! to prayers!" has told the British seaman that skill is baffled and courage vain, and that there is no hope for him but in his God. In the hour of their distress, the crew, composed probably of men of different nations, "cry every man to his God," and the solemn litany arose to Bel, Astarte, Hercules, or Nisroch, as the case might be. One man alone in that ill-fated ship knew how

to pray, and he dared not. Sin had glued his lips into silence, and had separated between him and his God. It is said of him, that he was gone down into the sides of the ship and "was fast asleep." When the storm convulsed the lake of Galilee the Saviour slept on a pillow till his terrified disciples awoke him with the cry "Lord save us, we perish," but he slept the sleep of innocence, and the rough waves woke him not. Jonah, exhausted with agonizing fears, until nature was incapable of further endurance, slept the sleep of guilt. But this was not to last. The false gods have been implored in vain, "but there was neither voice nor answer nor any that regarded." One man alone is prayerless, it may be that he can save them. The shipmaster came to him and said, "What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not." His inability to call upon his God discovers him; they cast their lots to know for whose cause this evil was upon them, and the lot falls upon Jonah, and he tells them his alarming tale—that he has set himself against Omnipotence—

that he bears his message in his bosom—that the storm is raised for him—that over his devoted head the thunder crashes and the lightnings glare—that the sea yawns to engulf him in its rushing waters—that he is the victim—for he is the clay striving with the potter, the creature contending with the Creator. How inexpressibly awful the situation! One case alone is still more terrible; it is that of some soul laden with unrepented sin, launched forth without helm or compass upon the wide wide ocean of eternity. Above are threatening clouds and an offended Deity. Around a maelstrom of whirling waves boiling with ceaseless fury. O! for some rope, some plank, some fragment of the ship to which he clung in life. O! for some arm that once proved strong to aid him now. Prayerless and Christless how shall he buffet the avenging waves? Friendless and hopeless how shall he “fall into the hands of the living God?”

At the request of the prophet, the mariners throw him into the sea. Heathen as they were, they appear to have had great misgivings about doing this. First, “they rowed hard to bring

the ship to land, but they could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous." Then they prayed that they might not be visited for the deed, "Lay not upon us innocent blood, for thou, O Lord, hast done as it hath pleased thee;" and only in their extremity, when, as Josephus says, "their misfortunes overbore them and the ship was just going to be drowned," did they comply with his request.

What kind of fish was prepared to receive the prophet we cannot know—the sacred narrative simply calls it "a great fish,"—(Dag gadol). Naturalists tell us it could not have been a whale, the throat of the whale not being of sufficient size to swallow a man. Christians, however, will see no greater difficulty in the miracle than in that of the storm and its sudden close. In fact, no one miracle is greater or less than another; it is as much out of the reach of man to suspend or alter the divine laws in the least as in the greatest. A miracle is only liable to suspicion when it is said to be wrought without sufficient evidence or sufficient cause.

One word descriptive of the fearful situation

of the prophet. For three days and three nights (and surely the tradition of such an event could not have been lost, a tradition so well known to every Jew that the Saviour appealed to it as the only sign which should be given to that generation) did this heaven-sent chariot pursue its winged way. Onwards—onwards—swifter than ever bark ploughed the brine, or bird sped through the air. Now plunging deeper than ever fathom sounded, now mounting the high crest of some breaking wave ; now diving down to the inmost of ocean's caves, now carried up to the stars of heaven. Onwards—onwards. No such ship ere tracked the foaming billows, laden with such a freight ; no such life-boat ever bore a rescued mariner ; no such ark ere floated on the waters, upholding such a burden ; a burden which waves could not quench nor waters drown, for he is the messenger of Deity, charged with the deathless, the imperishable word of God, “ which liveth and abideth for ever.”

And prayer ascended from that living grave. Prayer has ascended from strange places before now. Its echoes have been heard, not only from cathedrals and oratories, but from prisons,

and racks, and torture chambers, and piles of burning faggots, and holes and caves of the earth. The prayer of Daniel went up from a den of lions ; of Jeremiah from the miry pit in which he sank ; of Paul, from the midst of the howling Adriatic ; but never did prayer proceed from a charnel house more loathsome than that in which Jonah was incarcerated.

The cry of the prophet in his agony arose from "the belly of hell." When "the waters compassed him about, even unto the soul," when "the weeds were wrapped about his head," when "he went down to the bottom of the mountains, and the earth with her bars was about him for ever," "*Out of the deep*" he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard his voice. Oh, let us not wait for the tempest before we begin to call upon God. Let us pray to him in the sunshine as well as in the storm, and invoke him in the calm as well as in the hurricane. Neither let us doubt but that things asked for faithfully, will be obtained effectually. If the cry of penitent guilt could meet with a response, surely an answer will be given to the supplication of filial trust ; nay, more, he will forestal and anticipate

the sincere desires of his children ; their very thoughts, like the wire struck by electricity, shall penetrate in an instant the courts of Deity, and disclose their necessities to the Father of spirits, before their lips have uttered a sound. "It shall come to pass that before they call I will hearken, and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

Having spoken of the act of disobedience, we proceed to consider—

2. The causes which may have induced it.

This branch of our subject will give us an opportunity of comparing the statements of the Bible with the inscriptions found on the monuments of Nineveh ; but before we enter upon it, it will be necessary to meet an important objection. It has been said, "The language of the Assyrians, and the characters in which it was written, were unknown twenty years ago ; how then are they at all discoverable ?"

To this we answer. Trilingual inscriptions of Xerxes and Darius have been discovered in the Persian, Scythian, and Assyrian languages, similar, possibly, to the famous decree of Darius addressed to "all people, nations, and lan-

guages that dwell in all the earth," (Dan. 6) ; *written in three languages*, that the millions included in the one hundred and twenty provinces of that enormous empire might understand them. The meaning of one of these, the Persian, can be accurately known, for the Persian is a living language ; this, of course, would give the clue to the others, and make the deciphering of the Assyrian characters, not only probable but possible.

The Assyrian language moreover, is cognate with the Hebrew. The learned Jews and the Assyrians appear to have mutually understood each other. Thus, during the invasion of Sennacherib, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joab said unto Rabshakeh, the Assyrian tartan, or general, " Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language, *for we understand it*," whilst in defiance of this request, Rabshakeh " stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people which were on the wall."

Added to this, for several years, and almost from their first discovery, two rival scholars have been engaged in the work of

translating these inscriptions ; they have conducted their examinations independently of each other, and separated by great distances ; for, while one in Ireland found out that the name written on a certain marble obelisk, was "Jehu the son of Omri," the other made the same discovery at Bagdad. The result has been a substantial agreement as to the nature and meaning of the inscriptions. Indeed, had the translations been made by only one scholar, it might have been said that owing to the fallibility of human judgment, they should not be too much relied on ; but it is next to impossible that two intelligent men like Dr. Hincks and Colonel Rawlinson could agree as to the meaning of a nearly unknown language, had there been no real basis on which they had separately reared their edifice.

To give one more instance. A third student of the Assyrian language, the well-known inventor of the Talbot-type, thus writes in the *Journal of Sacred Literature*, for January, 1856. "I have, myself, for my own satisfaction, pursued to a considerable extent this branch of study, and have had many opportunities of com-

paring my own translation of words and phrases with those contained in the previously published works of Hincks and Rawlinson, and have frequently found a satisfactory agreement. This, it may be said, may be only the case of the disciple following the master; I will give you an instance which is free from this objection, and which will show that there is no illusion or deception in the matter. You are aware that certain trilingual inscriptions have been found in the Persian, Scythian, and Assyrian languages. Some years ago Col. Rawlinson translated most of these in the Persian language, but the Assyrian was at that time unknown to him, consequently he left the Assyrian language untranslated. Some month ago I took up one of these trilingual inscriptions, and without looking at Rawlinson's version, proceeded to translate the Assyrian writing, which I found I could easily accomplish; on comparing afterwards my version of the Assyrian with Rawlinson's version of the Persian, I found an almost perfect agreement." It is of consequence to notice this; for infidelity, pressed hard as she is likely to be, will turn boldly round and deny the truth of the

translations altogether; but although, as in every dead language, the meaning of words not in frequent use may not be thoroughly ascertained, yet still enough can be known for all practical purposes.

To return to our more immediate subject, Josephus says, "Jonah went not to Nineveh *out of fear.*" He might have dreaded the "bitter and hasty" character of the Assyrian nation: for, although the Nineveh of Jonah's day preceded that of the time of Sennacherib by one hundred and fifty years, so little change takes place in the stationary East, that in all probability its leading features were the same.

Complaint was made of the Nineveh of Jonah's time, "*of the violence that was in their hand*" (Jonah iii. 8), that is, of their cruel oppression of other nations less powerful than themselves. This tyrannical invasion of surrounding countries forms a leading and unenviable quality in the Assyrian character. A Poem, entitled "The Repentance of the Ninevites," composed by Ephraem Syrus, a father of the fourth century, describes the King of Nineveh as alluding to this "violence" on the

part of himself and his warriors, and contrasting their former triumphs with their present humiliation.

THE KING.

“The King convoked his armies,
He wept with them and they with him.
The King rehearsed in their presence,
The battles in which they had been crowned.
He also brought to their remembrance,
In what perils they had conquered.
But now his soul was feeble, and he was humbled,
For there was none to redeem nor help.
He began thus to address them :—
This, my friends, is not a war,
That we can go forth and conquer as we have been wont,
And triumph according to our pleasure ;
For even heroes are now trembling,
At the mighty rumour which is proclaimed abroad.
One Hebrew now conquers us,
Who have conquered many.
He hath made kings, even us, to tremble ;
And his word hath greatly disturbed us.
We have overthrown many cities,
But in our city he vanquishes us.
Nineveh, the mother of heroes,
Is afraid of a solitary feeble one ;
The lioness in her lair,
Trembles at the Hebrew.
Asshur has roared against the world,
But the voice of Jonah roars against her.

The same aggressive character is ascribed to these haughty conquerors by the prophet Isaiah. He represents the King of Assyria making the disdainful boast that he had been the giant spoiler of the world, the magnificent robber of the universe. "I have removed the bounds of the people and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man; and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathereth eggs that are left have I gathered all the earth." (Isaiah x. 13, 14.) Nahum compares Nineveh to a den of wild beasts. "Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid; the lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin." (Nahum ii. 11, 12.) Thus the Assyrian general, during the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, makes savage boast of the desolation of those nations which refused submission to his master's authority. "Behold thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have

done unto all lands by destroying them utterly." (2 Kings xix. 11.) So in the Apocryphal book of Judith it is said, "There was talk in the house of Nabuchodonosor, king of the Assyrians, that he should, as he said, avenge himself on all the earth, so he . . . concluded the afflicting of the whole earth out of his own mouth; then they decreed to destroy all flesh that did not obey the commandment of his mouth." (Judith ii. 1, 2, 3.)

Can any light be thrown upon this scriptural delineation of Assyrian character by the recent discoveries at Nineveh?

The peculiar feature of the subjects portrayed on the bas-reliefs is that of warlike invasion and savage oppression of surrounding nations. Battles, sieges, torture of captives, plunder and spoil, are the characteristics of these tablets. No hospitals, no infirmaries, no buildings dedicated to art and science, no traces—or but feeble ones—of commerce and of the gentler pursuits of men. All is war, terror, bloodshed, ferocity, triumph, and

"Battle's magnificently stern array."

Like the sea kings of the North, these bar-

barous hordes rushed out of their mighty fortresses only to plunder and destroy, and then, like wild beasts, to carry to their dens the spoil, and gorge upon the slain. This will be best explained by the inscriptions themselves; we therefore take an illustration from Mr. Layard's book, descriptive of "what the kings of Assyria did to all lands by destroying them utterly." "I crossed the Tigris. On the banks of the Tigris I received much tribute. In Kedni halted; I received the tribute of the city of Kedni. Whilst I was in Ariboa, the cities of Lukuta, I took, I slew many of their men. I overthrew and burned their cities. Their fighting men I laid hold of; on stakes over against their city I impaled them. At that time the countries that are upon Lebanon I took possession of. On the great sea (Mediterranean) I put my servants. The tribute of the kings of the people who dwelt near the sea, the Tyrians, the Sidonians, the Kubalians; silver and gold pieces, rings of copper, ingots of copper, two kinds of clothing, and pearls from the river at the sea. I went to the mountain of Kumana, I made beams and pillars. I brought them to Bithkara for my

own house, for the temple of the sun, for the temple of the sun. I went to the forests and cut them down and made beams of wood for Ishtar, mistress of the city of Nineveh, my protectress."

A second consideration which might have influenced the prophet was *the cruelty practised upon their captives by the Assyrians*. Mr. Layard thus describes this brutal treatment—

"Above the Assyrian warriors were their captives and their torturers—some in iron fetters were being led before the king for judgment or torture; others had been condemned to the torture, and were already in the hands of the executioners. Two were stretched naked at full length on the ground, and whilst their limbs were held asunder by pegs and cords, they were being flayed alive. Beneath them were other unfortunate victims undergoing abominable punishments. The brains of one were apparently being beat out with an iron mace, whilst an officer held him by the beard. A torturer was wrenching out the tongue out of the mouth of a second wretch who had been pinioned to the ground. The bleeding heads of the slain

were tied round the necks of the living, who seemed reserved for still more barbarous tortures. Above these groups was an inscription declaring that these men having spoken blasphemies against Asshur, the great god of the Assyrians, their tongues had been pulled out, and they had afterwards been put to death."

To one particular kind of torture the Bible alludes. Amos, speaking of the captivity of the ten tribes, says, "Lo the days shall come upon you that he will take you away *with hooks*, and your posterity *with fish hooks*." In like manner Isaiah describes the retreat of Sennacherib, "I will put my *hook* in thy nose and my bridle on thy lips, and will turn thee back by the way that thou camest." Ezekiel under a similar figure describes the discomfiture of Gog, "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." "I will turn thee back and put *hooks* into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth and all thine army, horses and horsemen." (Ezek. xxxviii. 4). The strangeness of this metaphor has induced some critics to suggest another reading, but a sculptured tablet has been discovered which explains the difficulty. It represents captives with their

hands tied behind them, and a small metal ring fastened on the lower lip of each, a cord was passed through it, by which the soldiers who had them in charge dragged them along. The sculptor has exhibited these unhappy men leaning helplessly forward to avoid the pain which the constant tugging of so tender a part must have given them.

As additional evidence of the oppression of these superb autocrats, we proceed to detail briefly the invasion of Judæa by Sennacherib, as confirmed by the recent invaluable discoveries at Nineveh.

After the carrying away of Israel captive by Shalmanezar, Sennacherib, his son, ten years later "came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them;" amongst these fenced, or walled cities, Lachish was conspicuous as having offered a more determined resistance than the rest; it was from Lachish that the Assyrian king sent a great host against Jerusalem, and it was whilst Sennacherib was besieging it that Hezekiah sent to offer him tribute. Soon after this Lachish fell, for when Rabshakeh returning from delivering his threat-

ening message against Jerusalem, "He found the King of Assyria warring against Libnah, for he had heard *that he was departed from Lachish.*" (2 Kings xix. 8.) Here, then, is proof that Lachish was one of the fortified towns besieged and taken by Sennacherib.

Turn we now to the confirmation of the scriptural narrative which these interesting discoveries have brought to light. Mr. Layard tells us, "During the latter part of my residence at Mosul, a chamber was discovered in which the sculptures were in better preservation than those before found. The marbles represented the siege and capture by the Assyrians, of a city evidently of great extent and importance. It appears to have been defended by double walls with battlements and towers. The whole power of the great king seems to have been called forth to take this stronghold . . . [and then follows a long description of the siege]. The besieged defended themselves with great determination—spearmen, archers, and slingers thronged the battlements, showering down arrows, javelins, stones, and blazing torches upon the assailants. Part, however, of the city

had been taken. Beneath its walls were seen Assyrian warriors impaling their prisoners; others were being slain before the throne of the king, above whose head was the following inscription: 'Sennacherib the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment *before the city of Lachish*; I give permission for its slaughter.'" Here then is dug out the evidence, not only that Lachish existed, but that it was one of the fenced cities taken by Sennacherib; and that its wretched inhabitants were either destroyed in the siege, or else led captive to grace the monarch's triumph at Nineveh.

After the capture of Lachish the sacred narrative informs us that "The king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh with a great host against Jerusalem." Hezekiah, trembling for the safety of his capital, and expecting a doom similar to that which had already overtaken Lachish and other principal towns, offers terms of submission; he sends to the king of Assyria to Lachish saying, "I have offended, return from me, that which thou putttest on me I will bear;" that is, he offers to

pay the tribute exacted by Sennacherib. The king of Assyria then fixes the tribute at thirty talents of gold, and three hundred talents of silver. "And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold." In his haste to get rid of this swarm of formidable invaders, or it may be in his inability to find the sum required, "Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and at that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria." (2 Kings xviii.)

Turn we now to these mounds of sand and rubbish over which men of all nations have passed for twenty-five centuries, little dreaming of the treasures of truth and knowledge which lay hid below. Some Arab workmen are digging and tunnelling into these apparently natural ridges, when they suddenly come to the forepart of a human-headed bull of colossal dimensions; the workmen are ordered to un-

cover the bull, which lay partly hidden in the rubbish, and it is found that in the same line with it is a second bull, and that this opens into a wide portal guarded by a pair of winged bulls, twenty feet long, and probably when entire, twenty feet high. Further excavations are made, when ten colossal bulls, and six human figures of gigantic proportion are found grouped together, the length of the whole being 180 feet. They have come in fact to the grand entrance of the palace of Sennacherib. On the great bulls forming the entrance, was one continuous inscription, repeated twice to ensure its immortality, containing 152 lines. We give the translation of Mr. Talbot, scarcely differing from that of Dr. Hincks, to which the former confesses himself unable to add anything essential. "Hezekiah king of Judah, who had not submitted to my government, forty-six of his strong fenced cities and lesser towns without number I destroyed. I carried away their women. I made . . . (some words effaced) of his royal city Jerusalem. I cut off from his kingdom several fortified cities. The people whom I carried off from the middle of his land

I placed in my own kingdom. Afterwards I made . . . the cities of Ascalon, Ekron, and Gaza. I conquered the land. An increase of their former fixed tribute, and of their gift of honour, and of their presents I imposed on them [a line effaced]. Hezekiah had *burnt with fire* my royal letters. Wherefore his best workmen and a thousand men of the zanakum (a word unknown) of Jerusalem, his royal city, I carried away captive. Thirty talents of gold; eight hundred talents of silver—his coined money; the treasures of his palace, his sons, his daughters, the . . . men of his palace, his men-servants, and his maid-servants, I carried away captive into Nineveh, and in the service of my empire I placed them.”

Compare this posthumous memoir, rescued after an oblivion of ages, with those scriptures of equal antiquity, which are in our hands to-day.

“Sennacherib king of Assyria,” says the sacred record, “came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them; an echo is heard from Nineveh, “*Forty-six of his strong fenced cities and lesser towns without number I destroyed.*”

“The king of Assyria,” it is said, “appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold;” the monuments of Assyria reply, “*Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver,* (a difference easily accounted for) his coined money I carried away.”

“Hezekiah,” we are told, “received the letter at the hand of the messengers and read it.” The rescued tablets answer, “*Hezekiah had burnt with fire* (possibly in contempt) *my royal letters.*”

The Assyrians declare their intention of taking Israel away “to a land like their own land.” The recovered inscriptions confirm the habitual practice of these conquerors, “The people whom *I carried off from the middle of his land*, I placed in my own kingdom.”

The sacred narrative declares that Sennacherib “departed from Lachish having taken it;” the throne of judgment before Lachish, responds, “*I give permission for its slaughter.*”

A voice from the world of misery once said, “If one went unto them from the dead they would repent.” Such a voice now issues from

the sepulchre of buried Nineveh, denouncing infidelity as a poor shallow thing, the offspring not of superior discernment, but of superior ignorance, challenging enquiry into the truth of these discoveries, and demanding from unsanctified intellect, submission to the insulted Majesty of Heaven. The same voice also, with gentler tones, announces to humble faith the probable attainment of far greater evidence than that which it already possesses; deeming it by no means impossible that the hand which has partially rolled away the covering of the great city, may bring to light yet clearer developments, and still more convincing proofs, establishing to demonstration the Bible to be true and to be no lie, and that for time and for eternity, it is wisdom to trust implicitly to its sacred contents.

JONAH'S ENTRANCE INTO NINEVEH.

“The just man Jonah opened his mouth,
Nineveh listened and was troubled.
A single Hebrew preacher
Made the whole city to fear.
His mouth spake and delivered its doom,
And distributed death to his hearers ;
The feeble herald stood up,
In a city of mighty men.”

*From the Syriac of Ephraem Syrus. By the
Rev. H. Burgess, Ph. D.*

LECTURE III.

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three day's journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."—Jonah iii. 1-4.

THE prophet had been charged by the word of the Lord to go to "Nineveh, that great city and to cry against it." This command Jonah had dared to disobey. We have already shown several causes of terror which might not have been without their influence upon his mind. We alluded to the fact mentioned by Josephus that "Jonah went not to Nineveh out of fear,"

concluding probably, that to proclaim in the rejoicing city that she should lose the dominion of Asia, might bring upon him the vengeance of an exasperated people. We also suggested that the savage and impetuous character of the Assyrians, combined with the abominable cruelties exercised upon their captives, might have afforded just grounds of alarm ; this added to the circumstances recorded in the book itself, that he entertained a suspicion that his preaching might not be attended with success, determined him to escape, if possible, from such responsibility, and "to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." Vain hope. He is entrusted with a message from God and he must deliver it. Mixed up with the sailors of heathen nations, who formed the crew of that ill-fated vessel ; concealing, or endeavouring to conceal, his prophetic character under the garb of an ordinary individual, the secret is wrenched out of his bosom that he is an Ambassador of the Most High. The heaven-sent tempest rages around him. The ocean stirs up its strength to arrest his steps. He is carried up to heaven and down to the depths beneath : but its wild

waves cannot extinguish the word of the Lord which he has received. He is cast, a propitiatory victim, into the whirling waters, "the weeds are wrapped about his head and the earth with her bars is about him for ever;" but the word of God is not lost amidst the billows. He is borne along, like the lightning, in the chariot of Leviathan; but out of that charnel house must the living word proceed, and foam cannot quench, nor waters drown the Promethean spark of divine kindling burning within him. He is vomited out upon the dry land, like some unhallowed resurrection from the dead, not a resurrection of majesty and strength, but of shame and contempt, but the word of God has survived through all; the prophet has not shaken off his responsibility or his mission; he is still the man of God charged with the message of the Highest, and he must deliver it.

The opening words of this chapter which tell us that "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah *the second time*," are fraught with mercy and compassion. That the divine communication should have been repeated at all is like the dealings of that gracious Being "who

willeth not that any should perish." It did not come a second time to the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord when "the lion met him by the way" in the act of transgression, "and slew him." It did not come a second time to the impious prophet whose lips refused to ratify the desires of his heart. No word of the Lord came a second time to Balaam ; he ended his prophetic career in one last impotent attempt to "curse whom God had not cursed, and to defy whom God had not defied." It was not so, however, in the case before us. Almighty wisdom perceived just cause why the offence of Jonah should be forgiven, and his mission renewed. Accordingly the prophet is once more enjoined to go to Nineveh. Not as the bearer of a new message, or one differing in the slightest degree from that already entrusted to him ; his disobedience has not changed one iota of the original command, "Arise and go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it *the preaching that I bid thee.*"

It has been thought that a city of the magnitude ascribed to ancient Nineveh is altogether

preposterous, and that no city of a circumference of sixty miles ever existed; but not only is the fact of its enormous size borne out by Diodorus Siculus, who calls it "Nineveh the great," and by Strabo, who says it was larger than Babylon, but it appears that the name, Nineveh, was applied to a group of cities which extended along the course of the Tigris, just as the name of London is given to the metropolitan boroughs of this great capital. Mr. Layard has observed four great mounds which form the corners of a vast oblong square, according with the elongated quadrangle described by the ancients. These lines of fortification would include an area of immense extent, and judging from the appearance of mounds and ruins extending for several miles to the north and south of Mosul, and from the circumstances that the ground is everywhere covered with the debris of broken brick and pottery, the sure signs of former population, there can hardly be a doubt but that Nineveh was one of the largest cities in the world.

We are not without some clue whereby to discover its population at the time when Jonah

preached there. It is said that within the city were "more than sixscore thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left." If these mean the infants, taking them as a tenth of the entire population, the number of the inhabitants would exceed a million and a quarter. But as we said before, we must not judge of the Nineveh of later times by the Nineveh of Jonah's day. It was in after years that she became "the hammer of the earth," and "the mistress of the nations." The country in which this great city stood was favourable to the growth of an enormous population. It was the country called Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Ezekiel ascribes its fruitfulness to the circumstance of its happy situation between these mighty rivers. "Thus was he fair in his greatness in the length of his branches, for his root was by great waters." The multitudes which poured forth from this locality for the purpose of spoil and invasion of surrounding nations are almost incredible. The Bible speaks of 185,000 destroyed in one night before Jerusalem, a circumstance altogether

omitted in the record of Sennacherib's invasion of Judea discovered at Nineveh ; it being the usage of the Assyrians only to record their victories, and to gloss over their defeats. In their accounts of their battles no Assyrians are ever said to have been killed, or even wounded, when the loss of their enemies is counted by thousands. It was from Nineveh that Nabuchodonosor went forth "to cover all the face of the earth westward with their chariots and horsemen and their chosen footmen, and a great number also of sundry countries came with them like locusts, or like the sand of the earth for the multitude was without number." (Judith ii. 19.) These scriptural statements of the enormous population of those regions are confirmed by the present aspect of the soil. We are told that "when the winter rains set in and furrow the land, inscribed stones and masses of brickwork, engraved pottery, and dry beds of enormous canals and water courses—for the Assyrians depended much on artificial irrigation—are spread like net-work over the country." In a word everything seems to show that the spot was one of the most fertile upon

earth, and that if a change has passed upon it; and it is now a wilderness, this desolation must be ascribed to the just punishment of a righteous God. "A fruitful land maketh he barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein; again, he maketh the wilderness a standing water, and watersprings of a dry ground."

Amidst these swarming multitudes the Hebrew stranger proceeds to deliver his message; "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Let us endeavour to repeople the present with the past, and to sketch (and, oh, how imperfectly) this gigantic dynasty. Ezekiel, with lips touched by the living flame from off the altar, depicts its glory in language such as inspiration can alone supply. "Behold the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all

the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied . . . all the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations . . . The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him ; the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut trees were not like his branches, nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty." (Ezekiel xxxi. 3-8.) Zephaniah calls Nineveh "The rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me." (Zeph. ii. 15.) Nahum speaks of her merchants as "multiplied above the stars of heaven," of her "crowned as the locusts," and her "captains as the great grasshoppers." (Nahum iii. 17.) Isaiah describes her as "gathering as a nest the riches of the people." (Isaiah x. 14.) Such, too, says modern research, must have been the grandeur of this colossal city. It has been said that from the anatomical inspection of a single bone the naturalist can reconstruct the entire frame of the

perished animal; if this be true, then surely from the ample materials within our reach we may clothe again with flesh the majestic skeleton of rescued Nineveh, and endeavour once more to rebuild the halls of Nimrod; we may add sinew to sinew, bone to bone, reanimate the mouldering form, and command the spirit of life to breathe upon the slain. Come, then, and let us restore in imagination the gorgeous dwelling of the Assyrian despot, and build up the old waste places, erst the palaces of Sennacherib; let us lay stone on stone, battlement on battlement, and bid the shadowy fabric once more awe the world with its departed glory.

Yes, there is the warrior on the ramparts armed with shield and helmet. And there, "the horseman lifts up both the bright sword and the glittering spear." Hark to "the noise of a whip and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses and of the jumping chariots" as they bound and jostle through the streets of Nineveh. And see where those colossal bulls, the guardian spirits of the land, tell their own tale of firm, hard, solid, stern dominion, as they plant their feet at the entrance of

Assyria's palaces, fixed and immoveable as the everlasting hills. Here are the captives from a hundred vanquished nations, dragging by numerical strength these massive monuments into their appointed place, or beaten to death under the cruel hands of their fierce oppressors. And lo! the throne of the great king, the mighty king, the king of Assyria. On every side arise superb memorials of plunder, violence, conquest, and dominion, contending with equally magnificent tokens of wealth, luxury, pleasure, and wickedness. Yes, there she sits, "the lady of kingdoms,"—"the well-favoured harlot,"—"the cedar in Lebanon,"—Earth-renowned Nineveh; her palaces choked with sand and rubbish, her temples defaced by time, her monarchs dust, and her glory a tale of years gone by, but yet as real and true as when she ruled the nations of the universe, and swayed with an iron grasp the destinies of mankind.

Imagine, then, the Jewish stranger treading the streets of this magnificent city. What varied sensations of awe and astonishment must have arisen within his breast: not the least of of these would be caused by *the haughty bearing*

and stately demeanour of the Assyrians themselves. This is repeatedly alluded to in Scripture. Ezekiel, speaking of the idolatries of Israel with their heathen neighbours, thus describes their majestic deportment: "She doted on the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men." (Ezek. xxiii. 12-13.) Such they are represented in the Scriptures, men of lofty stature, magnificent carriage, and remarkably large and muscular frame, with a physical development equal to deeds of daring and of violence.

They are further described as "pourtrayed upon the wall." "She saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea." (Ezek. xxiii. 14-15.) This is the peculiar nature of Assyrian architecture. The walls are everywhere covered with tablets recording their battles and their triumphs. As

we have before observed, two miles of this panelled sculpture have escaped the ravages of time in the part already explored : how much more must have crumbled into dust, or yet awaits some adventurous hand to denude it of its covering.

Another striking confirmation of the truth of Scripture is presented by the state in which these sculptures have been found. Ezekiel speaks of the "images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion," of the Assyrian captains and rulers, "clothed with blue," "exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads." This is the exact condition in which these relics have been found. "The appearance of rich colours," says Mr. Layard, "was distinctly visible on many of the slabs when first uncovered, but the colours perished with slight exceptions, on exposure to the atmosphere."

The same prophet represents the Assyrians as "girded with girdles upon their loins," and "clothed most gorgeously." No relics remain to show the nature of the materials of which this gorgeous clothing was composed, but we know that a "Babylonish garment" was

in estimation from very ancient times. The sculptures depict the Assyrian warriors with girdles or military belts of most costly workmanship tied round their waists. How close and perfect the agreement between the description of the prophet and these interesting discoveries; and how sincere a matter of congratulation to every lover of truth, that after a lapse of 3,000 years the chambers and corridors of Nineveh should be found covered with tablets of Chaldean warriors panelled "upon the wall," "all of them desirable young men," "princes to look to," "clothed with blue," "exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads," "pourtrayed with vermilion," "and girded with girdles upon their loins."

Next to the magnificent demeanour of the Assyrians themselves, Jonah would have been struck with wonder at *the grandeur of their military preparations*. Thousands and tens of thousands of chariots and horsemen equipped for battle doubtless met his eye, for the nation was but a horde of plunderers, and the huge city one vast den of robbers. The Scriptures abound with descriptions of their warlike arma-

ments. Thus Isaiah rebukes the proud boast of Sennacherib, "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains;" "I will bring (saith God by the mouth of Ezekiel) upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, a king of kings from the North, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people by reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee; thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots." (Ezek. xxvi. 7-10.) So Rabshakeh offers to Hezekiah "two thousand horses if he on his part should be able to set riders upon them." In the book of Judith we read of "twelve thousand archers on horseback." "Their horses," says Habakkuk, "are swifter than the leopards and are more fierce than the evening wolves." Nay, their numbers were so incredible that they are represented as exhausting the rivers of the countries through which they passed. "I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places." These statements of the Bible are sufficiently con-

firmed—not only is it certain that this particular region was favourable to the rearing of immense hordes of cattle, so that the Assyrian horses were famous throughout the world, but the bas-reliefs abundantly depict these chariots and horsemen trampling down their less powerful neighbours on a scale of unparalleled grandeur and ferocity. War was the atmosphere they breathed, and the business of life the demolition of their enemies, that is, of all who would not submit to their authority. We have seen that mention is made in the book of Judith of “archers on horseback ;” and it is not a little remarkable that on one of the slabs is a sculptured figure of these antecedents of the cruel Parthians ; “one of the horsemen is flying, and turns back while his horse is at full speed to discharge an arrow against his pursuers.”

Neither would the splendour of their public edifices be thrown away upon the Prophet's gaze. All that the genius of a powerful nation, aided by an unlimited number of slaves and captives, could effect, to add to the magnificence of their capital had doubtless been done. It appears, moreover, that not content with the

means of embellishment afforded by their own country, they ransacked and carried off the treasures of foreign lands to enhance the national grandeur. We give a remarkable instance. It would seem that a chief object of their savage inroads into Syria and the adjacent countries, *was to obtain the valuable cedar wood of Lebanon*. The Scriptures throw considerable light upon this circumstance. They represent the Assyrian general saying, "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof, and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders and into the forest of his Carmel." (2 Kings xix. 23.) Isaiah describes the cedars of Lebanon as rejoicing at the destruction of Babylon. "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us." (Isaiah xiv. 8.) Zephaniah, foretelling the desolation of Nineveh, says, "He will uncover the cedar work." These magnificent cedars, famous throughout the world, were carried to Nineveh, and used in the adornment

of their palaces and temples. In the highly poetical language of the inscriptions forcibly reminding us of Homer and Ossian—"I went to the mountain of Kumana. I made beams and pillars. I brought them to Bithkara, to my own house—for the temple of the Sun—for the temple of the Sun. I went to the forests and cut them down, and made beams of the wood for Ishtar, mistress of the city of Nineveh, my protectress." Can any light be thrown upon this practice of the Assyrians from recent discoveries? "Standing one day," says Mr. Layard, "on a distant part of the mound, I smelt the sweet smell of burning cedar. The Arab workmen had dug out a beam, and the weather being cold had made a fire to warm themselves. *The wood was cedar.* Close to the beam was an inscription to this effect: 'The countries that are upon Lebanon I took possession of to the great sea, (the Mediterranean).'" It is by no means unlikely but that the beam was one of those mentioned on the inscription as brought from Lebanon. After an interval of nearly three thousand years, it had retained its original scent; the perfume telling of Lebanon

by its unmistakeable fragrance ; still more odorous incense at the same time ascending upwards like the sweet smelling savour of acceptable sacrifice, to attest the unimpeachable veracity of the Word of God.

Such were the scenes through which the wondering prophet passed, uttering as he went his cry of warning and of fear, " Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The question arises, how came the message to meet with a favourable reception? Mr. Layard, indeed, tells us he has known instances of a Mussulman town terrified into tents and repentance by the proclamation of a Christian Priest announcing earthquake or plague, but we cannot, on such an hypothesis, account for the effect produced. True, the chastised ambassador would have been singularly anxious to discharge his mission faithfully ; there would have been an awful earnestness about him, such as the perils he had undergone must have inspired. He who had been delivered " out of the belly of hell," would have spoken with the solemnity of a messenger from another world, and his preaching must have been like the warnings of one risen from

the dead. But how the exhortations of one man, backed by no miracle to enforce conviction, should have awed the mightiest nation in the world into repentance, we are at a loss to discover. The clue may perhaps be found by a comparison of the scriptural statement with the recent discoveries. It is altogether improbable that the circumstances of Jonah's miraculous preservation could have been unknown to the people of Nineveh. The sailors of the vessel had possibly been there before him to spread the news of the miracle they had witnessed; neither have we any reason to suppose that the prophet himself would have concealed the fact. Now, it is not unworthy of notice, in connection with his successful mission, that among Assyrian objects of worship, the fish gods held a conspicuous place. These deities plentifully depicted on the tablets, are thus described by Mr. Layard, "Within the temple at right angles to the entrance were sculptured fish gods; the fish's head formed part of the three-horned cap usually worn by the winged figures, the tail only reached to the waist of the man." In another passage "Each entrance was formed by two

colossal bas-reliefs of Dagon or the fish-god. It combined the human shape with that of the fish; the head of the fish formed the mitre above that of the man, whilst its scaly back and fan-like tail fell as a cloak behind." According to Berosus "there appeared out of the Erythræan or Persian gulf an animal endowed with reason, called Oannes. Its body was like that of a fish, but under the head of a fish was that of a man, and added to its tail were women's feet; its voice, too, was human, and it spoke an articulate language; during the day it instructed the Chaldeans in the arts and sciences, teaching them to build temples, but at night it plunged again into the sea." These fish-gods were objects of worship not only amongst the Assyrians but the Philistines. Dagon, before whose image the ark of the Lord was brought, was a deity of this kind. We read (1 Sam. v.) that "Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold, only the stump (margin, fishy part) of Dagon was left to him." All this throws light upon the reception Jonah met with

at Nineveh. It is not improbable but that these blind idolators believed him to be in communication with the gods whom they worshipped. Thus his very shame was turned into his exaltation, and his disobedience into the cause of his wonderful success.

The idea we have entertained that Jonah must have been regarded as little short of a divine being is strengthened by the fact that the king of Nineveh humbled himself before him like the meanest of his subjects. The Assyrian monarch, be it remembered, was a thorough despot, adored as a god more than feared as a man. The unlimited and irresponsible authority of these tyrants is well set forth in the famous decree of Nebuchadnezzar that "every people, and nation, and language which spake anything amiss of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, should be cut in pieces and their houses should be made a dunghill;" a threat these mighty sovereigns were not without the power to execute. Nay, they openly claimed divine honours. "Who is God, asks Holofernes, but Nabuchodonosor?" Sennacharib not only asserted for himself power superior to the gods

of the heathen, but greater than that of Jehovah himself. "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria; where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad; where are the gods of Separvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?" "Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my hand?" (2 Kings xviii. 33—35.) The sculptures illustrate this practice of the Assyrians, and represent them carrying away captive the gods of the conquered nations, forming an invaluable commentary on the superb irony of the evangelical prophet, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a burden to the weary beast, they stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, *but themselves are gone into captivity.*" (Isaiah xli. 1, 2.)

But to return, such the almost superhuman position occupied by the lordly despots of Assyria. Nothing short of divine interference like "the fingers of the man's hand which wrote over against the candlestick on the

plaister of the wall of the king's palace at Babylon" had power to change the countenance or to trouble the thoughts of these magnificent autocrats. When, therefore, "the king of Nineveh arose from his throne and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes," he did so because he looked upon Jonah as one of the gods come down in the likeness of men, a supernatural being charged with a message of tremendous import to himself and to his people.

"The king came forth and shewed himself,
The city was moved when it saw his sackcloth.
What noble then hesitated,
Whether he should put off his fine linen?
Even the king wept when he saw
That the whole city was mourning.
The city wept before the king
When it saw the ashes on his head—
The king wept in the presence of the city,
Because it had become black with sackcloth.
The whole city shed tears
And excited the stones of the wall to weep.
The king arose and laid aside his robes,
They all put off their attire.
The king hastened and clothed himself with sackcloth,
And his troops like him put on blackness.
The Assyrians so sumptuously adorned,
Were suddenly clothed in mourning."

In addition to the causes already mentioned which may have had effect upon the heart of the king of Nineveh, it is by no means improbable, but that the defeat of the king of Damascus from whose hand Jeroboam had recovered "the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, *according to the word of the Lord God of Israel which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah,*" may not have been without its influence. Doubtless the intelligence of the accomplishment of this prediction had been heard by the people of Nineveh and prepared the way for the gracious reception of Jonah, and the message he was commissioned to deliver; and this, connected with the almost unearthly mode of his appearance amongst them, disposed their hearts to submission and repentance.

And what was that message? It was short but stern, concise but emphatic. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The interval, however, brief as it was, seemed to whisper the possibility of mercy. Seldom does the crashing of the thunder-cloud instantaneously follow the lightning, or the torrent,

swollen from the summer brook into the rushing river, acquire an immediate velocity. Seldom do the judgments of Omnipotence overtake individuals or nations, without premonitory and sufficient warning. "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah" one hundred and twenty years. The threatened vengeance was delayed for forty years before that desolation, which could never be repeated, swept away the Jewish people from the catalogue of the nations. And in like manner, time and space was given to these idolatrous Ninevites. Their heathen ignorance was a plea in their favour with God. He could not say to them, as to His own people, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquity." The temples of Nisroch, Astarte, Bel, and Asshur, their revolting worship, their disgusting obscenities, their utter ignorance of the things which belonged to their everlasting peace, seemed to plead for respite, and to induce Him who delighteth in mercy to direct the message of His ambassador towards repentance.

No sculpture has, as yet, been found having any reference to Jonah's preaching at Nineveh. One of the mounds, however, still bears the traditional name of Nebbi Yunus, "the Prophet Jonah." Here, it is said, is the tomb of the prophet. The pretended tomb itself is in a dark inner room—none but Musselmen should be admitted within its sacred precincts—a wooden sarcophagus entirely concealed by a green cloth, embroidered with sentences from the Koran, stands in the centre of the apartment. A similar tradition places the tomb of Ezekiel amongst the ruins of Babylon. This mound Mr. Layard was unable to excavate. A village has risen round the mosque containing the tomb, and the rest of the ground is occupied for a burial place, thickly set with Mahometan grave stones. The dead from the surrounding country are brought to this sacred spot; and to have disturbed a grave on the Nebbi Yunus might have led to unpleasant results. But, although tradition assigns this spot as the burial place of Jonah, there is not sufficient grounds for believing that he died, or was buried, at Nineveh. Josephus says that

after his mission was accomplished, he returned to his own country,—“Jonah went to the city of Nineveh, where he stood so as to be heard, (compare the ‘day’s journey into the city,’) and preached that in a very little time (‘yet forty days’) they should lose the dominion of Asia, and when he had published this, he returned.” Ephraem Syrus not only mentions Jonah’s return, but that he brought back many of the Ninevites with him, who are represented as astonished to find the country of Jonah even more wicked than the city of Nineveh. “Jonah (he says) returned from Nineveh and retired with his mother to Tyre; for by doing this,” he said, “I shall not be exposed to the derision of men who taunt me with my false prophecy respecting the destruction of Nineveh.” On this, however, no reliance can be placed. It is not impossible but that further discoveries may throw more light upon the subject, and give that information which at this distance of time, it is impossible otherwise to obtain.

**JONAH'S PREACHING TO THE
NINEVITES.**

“ In what hour will the city be destroyed ?
Will it be thrown down in the evening,
Or will its ruin take place in the morning ?
In what watch will come upon us
The sound of the dreadful earthquake ?
They thought that the city would fall at even,—
The evening came and it yet stood.
They thought they should be swallowed up at night,—
That night they continued among the living.
They expected the overthrow in the twilight,—
The twilight passed and they were not destroyed.
They thought the city would fall in the morning,—
The morning came and their hope increased.”

*From the Syriac of Ephraem Syrus, by the
Rev. H. Burgess, Ph. D.*

LECTURE IV.

“So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?”—
Jonah iv. 5-11.

HISTORY tells us of a great man, ill-requited for his services by his thankless countrymen,

musings over the transitory nature of human distinction amidst the levelled palaces of a capital, once the formidable rival of ancient Rome. Marius sitting amidst the ruins of Carthage, has been a theme for the poet, the painter, and the historian. The wreck of the man and of his magnificent expectations, vying in sublimity of desolation with the wreck of the city and its once earth-spread glory; the solitary grandeur of the hero who aspired to the sovereignty of the world, contending in majestic loneliness with the deserted columns of the dynasty which competed with imperial Rome for universal dominion, has formed a picture from which ambition might ever learn the stern, yet necessary, lesson, that human greatness is not always the source of human happiness. In the chapter before us we have the Hebrew prophet, if not sitting in savage dignity amidst the overthrow of the Assyrian capital, yet mourning in sullen sadness over the disappointment of his unmerciful desires. *The forty days have passed and Nineveh has not fallen.* Why is there not heard the rush of the enemy at her gates? Why do not her

streets resound, as afterwards, "with the noise of a whip and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots?" Why does not "the horseman lift up both the bright sword and the glittering spear, and there is a multitude of the slain, and a great number of carcasses, and there is none end of their corpses, and they stumble upon their corpses?" (Nahum iii. 3.) Why is not that terrible vision seen over Nineveh which David saw over Jerusalem, when he "lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem, and David and the elders of Israel who were clothed in sackcloth fell upon their faces?" Why are not the heavens above the doomed city lit up with prodigies such as preceded the desolation of the Jewish house, when "armies were seen engaging in the heavens, and the temple shone with sudden fire out of the clouds; and the doors of the temple opened suddenly, and a voice greater than human was heard saying 'Let us depart hence?'" The heart of the great metropolis

still throbs with life. Its pulses beat in regular succession. Along its gigantic arteries the teeming population continues to pour forth; and the day of its existence is still prolonged. One man alone with uncharitable and eager haste longs to see it swept from the earth. One man alone with feverish expectancy anticipates its downfall. In the whisper of every gentle breeze he hears the distant tread of the approaching enemy. In every ray of light he discovers some unusual brightness to be converted in an instant into a consuming fire. Behind every silver edged cloud he looks for the sword of the destroying angel. What, he cries, "Is not thy word as a fire and as a hammer upon the rock?" "Hath God said, and shall he not do it, hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?" He seemed to forget that the judgments of Omnipotence though sure, are sometimes delayed; that as in the case of Ahab, vengeance occasionally pauses awhile ere she strikes the blow. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me, because he humbleth himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his

son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

A powerful description of the consternation of the Ninevites, in the prospect of the impending calamity is given by Ephraem Syrus. He represents the period of the forty days as attended with earthquakes, darkness, thunders and lightnings, indicative as it were of the approaching judgment.

"The day was arriving when the city should be overthrown,
 The time drew near when it should be destroyed;
 And the whole city had become
 But mourning, and weeping, and lamentation.
 The dust of the ground was moistened,
 Their tears made it as clay.
 Each man grasped the dust,
 And called louder upon God.
 All cried out in prayer,
 Their palms were filled with ashes.
 No lamentable sound was wanting there,
 It was all lamenting and weeping.
 The sackcloth walls shed tears,
 Being sprinkled with bitter ashes;
 The very day grew dark,
 It became thick with sackcloth—
 The air itself was affrighted,
 And the heaven trembled;
 The cloud and thick darkness enveloped it,

The gloom became thicker and gathered strength.
Loud noises clashed together,
The thunder met its fellow ;
And lightnings pressed on lightnings.
Each man beheld the earth,
With consternation and commotion of heart,
For he thought it was near to ruin.
They all wept together,
As men who should suddenly perish.
The brother met his brother,
And did not recognize his form.
A man met his companion,
And could not discern his countenance.
The ear could not distinguish
One voice from another.
Neither could the eye see the difference
Between form and form.
Like shadows of the gloom
Had they become through their misery—
They were scorched up like brands
By that severe fast.
Their bodies had wasted by watching,
Only the skin and skeleton remained.”

The words of Jonah did not, however, as he at this time thought, return empty to him again. A Jewish captive in Nineveh not only declared that they should not fall to the earth, but lived to hear of their accomplishment in the destruction of Nineveh. The interesting

passage is found in the apocryphal book of Tobit. "Go unto Media, my son, for I surely believe those things which Jonas the prophet spake of Nineveh; that it shall be overthrown, shall surely come to pass, and before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineveh which was taken by Nabuchodonosor and Assuerus." (Tobit xiv. 4—15.)

And here an opportunity presents itself, of comparing the prophetic descriptions of the downfall of Nineveh with the recent discoveries. Among the causes which should combine to effect its overthrow, not the least remarkable was to be *fire*. "I will punish (saith God by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah) the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness, and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire; and the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy one for a flame, and it shall burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day." (Isaiah x. 12, 16—17.) So Nahum, "The fire shall devour thy bars."

“There shall the fire devour thee.” (Nahum iii. 13–15.) We are assured upon indisputable authority that abundant traces of the devouring element by which Nineveh was partially destroyed have been discovered. Marbles and slabs have been so calcined by the heat that they crumbled into dust upon any attempt at removal. Great quantities of charcoal and of burnt beams have been found, and in some instances the sculptured slabs have been converted into lime, plainly declaring fire to have been the instrument of their destruction.

Another class of prophecies declares that *water* as well as fire should be an element used in the desolation of Nineveh. “The gates of the rivers shall be opened and the palace shall be dissolved.” “Nineveh is of old like a pool of water.” (Nahum ii. 6–8.) These were strictly fulfilled. Babylon was taken by turning the channel of the Euphrates. Nineveh by a flood of the Tigris beating down part of the walls. As long as these walls remained standing, the place was secure, the immense area included within them producing sufficient food for the inhabitants. But at the throwing down of their

bulwarks by a sudden inundation of the Tigris, the men of Nineveh lost all heart to defend their city. In the truly Eastern metaphor of the prophet, "Behold thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies." (Nahum iii. 13.) And the raging elements combined, so completely effected the ruin of Nineveh, that Mr. Layard says he is almost inclined to think some volcanic agency must have been exerted in its overthrow.

The utter and irremediable destruction of Nineveh is also a favourite theme of ancient prophecy. "There is no healing of thy bruise, thy wound is grievous; all they that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee, for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually." (Nahum iii. 19.) "He will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like a wilderness, and flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it, their voice shall sing in the windows how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in." (Zeph. ii. 13—15.)

The best commentary upon these words may be deduced from the fact that for three thousand years the spot was unknown where Nineveh once filled the earth with her glory,—that men of all countries, climes, cast, and colour trod these mounds in ignorance, only equalled by their indifference. It is particularly mentioned by Zephaniah that it should be “a place for beasts (wild beasts) to lie down in.” Of Lower Mesopotamia, Mr. Layard says, “The marshes and jungles near the rivers are the retreats of many kinds of wild animals; lions abound; and during the excavations at Niffer we found fresh traces of their footsteps almost daily among the ruins.” Of course it is no cause of wonder that a wilderness like that in which these remains are situated, should be the lair of wild creatures; the marvel is, that while she yet stood in her pride of place, her future desolation should have been accurately predicted, and that the traveller of the nineteenth century should find her to be what the ancient prophets foretold, “a place for beasts to lie down in.”

Such is the tale of “Nineveh, that great city,” Repenting for a while at the preaching

of Jonah, she afterwards hardened herself against God, and like all who harden themselves against Him, she did not prosper. Such the history of her who was called "The cedar in Lebanon." "The well-favoured harlot." "The rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly." "I have driven him out (saith God) for his wickedness, and strangers, the terrible of the nations have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches, to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs." (Ezekiel xxxi. 11—14.)

But to return from this digression to the Prophet and his mission. He had uttered in the streets of the Assyrian capital the preaching bidden him of God. This message, added to the supernatural character of the ambassador,

who, as our Lord says, was “a *sign* unto the Ninevites,” was accompanied by the sincere and genuine repentance of the whole nation. The king of Nineveh, regarded more as a god than as a man, himself sets the example ; and this, in conformity with the usages of uncivilized, and especially, Eastern nations, appears to have been followed by all his subjects. The blind and unhesitating obedience of the children of the East to their rulers, as unto beings of a superior order, is matter of universal notoriety. Thus the death of the king in battle generally determined the fate of the day. From a recognition of this principle, Alexander by overturning the chariot of Darius, and thereby causing a report of his death, won the battle of Arbela. A similar intuition instructed Cortez, in a different hemisphere, when his little band of gallant warriors was well nigh overpowered by thousands of Mexicans, by striking down their chief, to cause the discomfiture of the whole army. In the case before us the repentance of the sovereign was the signal for the general humiliation of the people. “For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his

throne and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes ; and he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything : let them not feed nor drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God ; yea let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not." (Jonah iii. 6-9.)

It would seem by no means improbable that the sentence which Jonah was commissioned to pronounce upon the Ninevites was *conditional*.

" For grace on this condition
Had commissioned the Prophet,
Not that the city should be destroyed,
But should be saved when penitent."

If this be so, and the saying of Jonah while he was yet in his own country, " I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil," appears to confirm it, then how exquisite

an illustration is this mercy shown to the Ninevites of the dealings of Him, "who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

It will require no great stretch of imagination to picture to our minds the plea which these blind idolaters might have used in vindication of their abominable wickedness. Nay, might not the defence of one of these have been something of this kind—"I was born in a heathen land, and educated amidst dark rites and gross superstition—a worshiper of Bel, Nisroch, and Ashtaroth. I was taught that revenge was a virtue and that mercy was a crime. I revelled in war and blood because I was instructed thus to propitiate the eagle-headed deities whom I worshipped, therefore I flayed alive my enemies, and pulled out the tongues of those who had spoken blasphemies against Asshur, the great god of the Assyrians. I never heard of one living and true God, maker of heaven and earth. I never listened to the voice of his messengers. No divine law ever disclosed me its precepts of goodness and truth. I must have died in the ignorance in which I lived, but for this call to

repentance; and I now throw myself on the compassion of Him who will do right." Are we surprised that under such circumstances (for circumstances alone enhance or diminish guilt) the purposes of Omnipotence towards these sinners "in ignorance and unbelief" should have been changed, and that "in wrath God should have remembered mercy."

The men of Nineveh, said our Lord, should rise in judgment, to condemn the men of the generation which heard his gracious teaching, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah while the latter were insensible to the warnings of "God manifest in the flesh;" and shall we wound the vanity of our readers if we would teach them and ourselves the lesson, that, on the principle that men will be judged by the light they have, and not by the light they have not, Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh and Babylon, are less guilty than Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum and Jerusalem. We have put an excuse (and one which prevailed with a righteous judge) into the mouth of an inhabitant of heathen Nineveh: let us make one, if we can, for an inhabitant of enlightened Jerusalem, or if the name be

changed of Christian England, for it will do as well. Possibly it might run after this fashion :—
“I belonged to the family of God—I was taught from infancy to know and to love God—the music of his temple rang in my ears from childhood—I imbibed every good and holy precept out of his wonderful law—I was surrounded by his loving-kindness. When I rebelled against him I resisted grace, light, and knowledge; when I forsook him, I forsook my own mercy.”

Oh! if the men of Nineveh rose up to condemn the men of Jerusalem, let us beware lest the sinners of Jerusalem rise up to condemn us. Our spiritual light is as much above that enjoyed by the men of Jerusalem, as the light of Jerusalem was above that of Nineveh. Be it our aim that it may so “shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” Let it not be like Joshua’s sun “standing still;” or like the shadow on the dial of Ahaz “going backward;” but like the bright orb of heaven in his daily march athwart the pathway of the skies, “A light shining more and more unto perfect day.”

Such, then, the penitent aspect of humbled

and prostrate Nineveh. It would seem that even the brute creation were not exempted from the general fast ; " Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything ; let them not feed nor drink water : but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God." We may suppose that the gorgeous trappings and head furniture, enriched with emblematic devices, with which the Assyrians decked their unoffending cattle, and especially their war-horses, were taken off and exchanged for the sombre and funereal hue of sackcloth. Not man alone, but every living being exhibited contrition and implored forgiveness.

" The whole city, with one consent,
Was knocking at the gates of the grave."

It is remarkable, that among the fasts of the Syrian Churches there is one called " The Fast of the Ninevites," which is continued to this day. It is observed in the most solemn manner, and very few take food during the three days that it lasts, until sunset. The origin of this fast is unknown. Whether it arose from a pious memory of Jonah and Nineveh, names hallowed in the Syrian Church, or whether it

was intended to commemorate a deliverance similar to that experienced by the Ninevites, is matter of uncertain tradition. It would appear that the poem of Ephraem Syrus, to which we have frequently referred, was preached by that ancient father to the people of Edessa during some such period of humiliation. Strange as it may sound to us, it was a sermon in a metrical form. The works of Ephraem, which were held in the highest estimation, were read, says Dr. Burgess, in the services of the church, and to this day form important parts of the Syrian rituals; the subject of "The Repentance of Nineveh," which we have introduced as illustrative of our subject, being used by the Nestorians. We shall not, therefore, deem it necessary to apologise for the insertion from so interesting and venerable a source, of one more extract descriptive of the rejoicing of the people of Nineveh at the great mercy vouchsafed in their deliverance. It is a passage of much force and beauty, and is not only curious as a specimen of the metrical style of preaching employed by the deacon of Edessa, in imitation, possibly, of the writings of the Prophets, the Psalms, and the

Book of Job, but manifests deep compass of thought as well as sincerity of devotion.

"Then they all sang distinctly,
While sincerely rejoicing,
This song of praise to God.

Let thankful voices ascend to Him
From the impure who have repented and been cleansed.
Let the wrathful and the rash
Offer to him a new song.
Let even the licentious ones render thanksgiving,
And praise Him because they are made chaste.
Let the covetous praise Him
Because He hath taught them to give alms.
Let the prodigal praise Him,
Because they have gained judgment and intellect.
Let the profane cursers praise Him,
Because their mouth hath learned to bless.
Let the orphan praise Him,
Because He hath become his patron.
Let the widow bow down before Him,
Because He hath heard her oppression in His kindness.
Let our kings praise Him,
As they see their cities in peace.
Let the rulers praise Him,
Who have returned again to their offices.
Let the rich praise Him,
Who can again look upon their treasures.
Let the fathers praise Him,
Who have enlarged their hope of their children.
Let the sons also praise Him,
For the sight of their parents.

Let the innocent children praise Him,
Because their life is prolonged.
Let the new-made mothers praise Him,
For they are blessed with their sucklings.
Yea, let the nurse praise Him,
For the blest babe upon her bosom.
Let the virgins praise Him,
That they have been preserved from ruin.
Let the judges greatly bless him,
Because they are not judged according to their own
sentences.
Let the offender and the offended
Greatly bless God.
Let all stations of every kind
Offer praise with great joy,
Because they are delivered from perdition,
And become new-born.

In the words of the prophetic narrative itself, "And God saw their works that they turned every one from his evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not."

In the midst of this rejoicing of the rescued city, one heart alone is bowed down by grief and despair. It is that of the ambassador who had pronounced her doom. He feels himself in the position of "The lying prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing

saying, The Lord saith, although the Lord hath not sent them, and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word." He desires to die as one whose message would never more be trusted, and whose prophetic character was utterly lost, "Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." In his distress he departs out of the city and builds for himself a booth "over against the east side of the city, and sat under it in the shadow till he might see what would become of the city." This booth of Jonah was, in all probability, the common tent of black goat's hair, to this day in use amongst the Arabs; for our notions of an encampment of these children of the desert would be very erroneous if we supposed their tents to be white canvas ones like our own. These goat's hair tents are at times insufferable from the heat. Mr. Layard mentions the circumstance that at certain seasons the excessive heat rendered their shelter insufficient, and that he was obliged to make huts for the people employed in digging out the excavations. Over this booth an Almighty Providence caused to

spring up in one night, a gourd, a fast growing plant, whose large and beautiful leaves the writer has seen commonly used in the tropics, to keep the sun from water for drinking; the fruit forming the cup, and the leaf the covering. We can easily imagine the luxury of the broad canopy of the leafy parasite over such a dwelling, and can understand why "Jonah should have been exceeding glad because of the gourd." Hardly, however, had he felt the enjoyment of this luxury (and to know the value of shade, we must transplant ourselves in imagination to Eastern climes and a tropical sun) when a worm struck at the root of it, causing it to wither as fast as it had sprung up, and a vehement east wind arising, the hot "sun beat upon the head of Jonah that he fainted."

And here again we must have recourse to Eastern travel to understand the combined effects of sun and wind. Mr. Buckingham thus describes their power upon his party. "It was about this time that the wind began to be felt by us coming in short sudden blasts like the hot dry vapour of an oven: soon after, we saw large columns of sand and dust whirling up

into the air and carried along in a body over the plain with a slow and stately motion." The effect of this wind, he says, was very distressing. "Our clothes were filled with sand, our nostrils, ears, and mouth with finer dust, our skin dried up to cracking, and ourselves parched and fainting with thirst." Such was the situation of the prophet. Possibly he experienced a sun-stroke, no uncommon occurrence in those sultry latitudes; and the vehement east wind and vertical sun combined, made life insupportable, and caused him once more to wish for death. And then came the just expostulation, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it to grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night, and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle."

But leaving these illustrations of the situation in which we find the Prophet placed, we pause a moment to consider a few practical reflections suggested by the history of the gourd.

We read that "*God prepared a gourd.*" Without entering into the much disputed question of the nature of this plant, it may reasonably be presumed, that although vegetable life is produced in these fertile regions with inconceivable rapidity, the growth in one night of a tree of sufficient size to have shadowed the hut of Jonah, must have been the result of miracle. Jonah, then, owed this comfort to God. He had to thank the Author of every blessing, temporal and eternal, for this act of kindness and condescension. And what mercy, let us ask, small or great, does not come to us from the same source? Sum them up. Bring them out by their names—health—strength—sense—reason—food—raiment—home—friends—children. Separate, if possible, one blessing from among the rest, and say, I have found one with which the Giver of every good and perfect gift has had nothing to do. Learn, then, the trite, yet often forgotten truth, that "*God prepares the gourd,*" and that the withdrawal, even in the least, of his daily recurring mercies would be the withdrawal of life itself.

A second valuable lesson is, that "*God pre-*

pare the worm." Earthly trials, as well as earthly blessings, proceed from Him. A gracious Father has worms as well as gourds in his storehouse, and the one is often as needful for us as the other. We thank God, however, for the gourd, but like the prophet, we are sometimes angry when he sends the worm.

And mark also when God sends the worm *He sends it to the root of the gourd*. Not only some of the leaves and branches, but the whole plant is withered. The entire fabric of our worldly prosperity is thrown down. The very springs of our social happiness are dried up. The servant of the Lord is sometimes brought into deep waters where he cannot touch the ground, that he may learn to place his hope and his dependence in God alone.

And this leads us to observe *that there is no gourd without some worm or other at the root*. It is written on crowns and coronets, on all that is great, noble, magnificent, and splendid, "There is a worm at the root of the gourd." It is written on halls of commerce, and palaces of trade, on nuggets of gold and silver, on railway shares and shipping, on all schemes of

business and profit which engross the head and heart of man, "There is a worm at the root of the gourd." It is written on wine-cups and banquets, on pleasure's brilliant wreath, and on earth's gayest flowers, on youth and manhood, beauty and loveliness, "There is a worm at the root of the gourd." No earth-sprung gratification is free from it: no earth-born good can bring perfect and satisfying rest and peace to a being formed like man for the enjoyment of higher and immortal things.

There is, however, "A TREE OF LIFE," better than any gourd of earthly growth, under the broad shelter of whose abiding foliage we may live in peace and die in hope. That heavenly plant is Christ. Isaiah speaks of Him as, "a refuge from the storm and a shadow from the heat." Zechariah calls Him "The Branch." Ezekiel, "A plant of renown." He says of Himself, still keeping up the figure, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

Unlike the ephemeral gourd of the Prophet, "which grew up in a night and perished in a night," the protection afforded by this Great Tree is firm, durable, and consolatory, even in

the absence of every earthly good. It is a refuge for day and night, heat and frost, summer and winter, sunshine and storm, calm and tempest, sorrow and gladness, smiles and tears, life and death, time and eternity, earth and heaven. Its omnipotent and almighty shadow encompasseth the universe; and all in whose nostrils is the breath of life rejoice in its sustaining and inexhaustible comfort, refreshing alike creatures who dwell in houses of clay, as well as angelic natures, whose starry mansions encircle the throne of God.

This is the only Tree at whose root no worm is found; whose branch shall not wither; whose leaf shall not fade; whose stem shall not decay; and beneath whose undying and ever-verdant canopy is a sure resting-place and an eternal home. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace."

Before we bring these Lectures to a close, let us take one last look at the great city so mercifully spared.

In an age fertile in discoveries like our own, when every day brings to light some new invention, or some improvement upon those which

have gone before ; when all things have a progressive tendency, and retrogression is well nigh impossible, it should be a subject of congratulation to the friends of religion that they are able to keep pace with the general advance. If other sciences meet with able champions, why should not that noblest science, which teaches man how to live and die, regulates his conduct in time, and his hopes for eternity, meet with staunch supporters and zealous advocates? Now, we cannot help thinking that the discoveries recently made in Assyria and Babylon, throwing as they do, much light on the page of prophecy, and tending to confirm the statements of divine revelation, are capable of adding an immense increase on the side of truth. Individually, we never questioned or felt disposed to cavil at the declarations of Holy Writ ; from our childhood we have been taught to revere them ; and as soon should we have doubted of our own existence as of that of the great Nineveh of the Bible. It mattered not to us where the huge city stood or what the period of its desolation ; all this we took on trust, simply because we found it written in the Scriptures. But since the covering

of the Assyrian capital has been rolled away, the veracity of the Word of God appears established a hundred-fold. We seem to see the gigantic city bursting from its sleep of ages, and once more filling the earth with its glory. We seem able to repeople the present with the past, and to adorn once more the palaces of Sennacherib with the gorgeous array of Assyrian splendour. We seem to hear the busy hum of its swarming myriads, and to behold the triumphant processions of its conquering legions. We seem to listen to the groanings of its miserable captives, and to realize the cruelties of their stern and merciless oppressors. We seem to enter the temple of Nisroch with the royal victim, and to contemplate the parricidal act of Adrammelech and Sharezer; fit incense to such a deity. We seem to know more perfectly the reason why the Prophet was sent unto them—"because of the violence of their hands," and to grasp more fully the scriptural description of their aggressive despotism, "Thou hast heard what the Kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly." Yes; from beneath those mounds, alternately covered with sand and

verdure, have been dug out the names of more than seventy places and persons mentioned in the sacred narrative ; names familiar to us as household words, such as Jehu, Omri, Hezekiah, Hazael, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Jerusalem, Samaria, Lachish, Babylon : and not only so, but the very records of transactions of which the Scriptures speak have been rescued from these buried chambers.

The Bible says of the terrible invasion of Sennacherib, " In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah did Sennacherib, King of Assyria, come up *against all the fenced cities* of Judah, and took them." The voice from the grave answers, " At that time *forty-six of his principal cities* I captured, and carried away their spoil."

The Bible says : " The King of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah, King of Judah, *three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.*" The voice from Nineveh replies, " He took from Hezekiah the treasure he had collected in Jerusalem, *thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver.*"

The Bible says : " Hezekiah received the

letter at the hands of the messenger and read it." The answer is, "Hezekiah *had burnt with fire my royal letters.*"

The Bible says: "The King of Assyria was warring against Libnah, for he had departed from *Lachish.*" The halls of Nimrod return the echo—"Sennacherib, the mighty king, the King of Assyria, sitting in judgment before *Lachish*, I give permission for its slaughter."

The Bible says: "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the sides of *Lebanon.*" It is responded: "The countries that are upon *Lebanon* I took possession of to the great sea."

The Bible says: "I will cut down the *tall cedar trees* thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof." The answer is given: "I made beams and pillars; *I went to the forests and cut them down*, and made beams of the wood for Ishtar."

The Bible says: "Desolation shall be in the thresholds, for he will uncover *the cedar work,*" and lo! the Arab workmen dig out *the cedar beams*, which are now in the museums of Europe.

The Bible says: "Arise, go to Nineveh, and

cry against it ;” and tradition to this day points out the mound of *Nebbi Yunus*.

The Bible says : “ Nineveh was an exceeding *great* city of three days’ journey ;” and the palaces of Sennacherib rising from their ashes confirm the fact.

The Bible says : “ The Chaldeans ‘ were princes to look to,’ *pourtrayed with vermilion upon the wall ;*” “ clothed with blue,” “ exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads.” And the exhumed city discloses *two miles of these panelled sculptures*, the colours fresh as if they had been just touched by the artist—men of gigantic stature and magnificent appearance.

The Bible speaks of their chariots and their horsemen as the dust of the earth, and as the sand of the sea ; and the tablets reveal their immense armaments and superb military preparations.

The Bible speaks of their “ archers on horse-back,” and the sculpture describes the fugitive warrior in the act of discharging his arrow on his pursuers.

The Bible speaks of their cruel mode of carrying away their prisoners by means of a

hook fastened to the lip or nose. The sculptures depict captives dragged along in this miserable manner.

The Bible describes the instrument by which Nineveh was to be destroyed—"The *fire* shall devour thy bars," "There shall the *fire* devour thee;" *and the charred beams and the calcined slabs* bear witness to the veracity of eternal truth.

And not least of all, the Bible speaks of *her irremediable desolation*. "There is no healing of thy bruise, thy wound is grievous, all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap their hands over thee, for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually;" and for a period equal to half the time occupied by the history of man from the creation to the present day, Nineveh is "a desolation and dry like the wilderness," "*a place for beasts to lie down in.*"

Taken as a whole, this proof is irresistible. You may doubt this or that: you may say the character of the Assyrian inscriptions has not yet been sufficiently mastered to place implicit confidence in the translations. You may question the meaning of particular words, and may

argue, and very justly, that possibly serious mistakes may have arisen. But you cannot deny the general truth of these discoveries. Surely, if every word of the translations was false, there is sufficient evidence from these excavated memorials to establish the fact, not only that the Nineveh of the Tigris is the Nineveh of the Bible, but that the peculiar characteristics of her greatness, as recorded in the Scriptures, are correct. Moreover, the magnitude of the researches defies scepticism, while it enhances their incalculable value; for, be it remembered, it is not simply a solitary relic which has been rescued from oblivion, but monuments on a scale to reconstruct the history of Assyria, and to afford an insight into the habits and customs of the most ancient empire in the world. We cannot help again and again expressing our deep conviction that this confirmation of the statements of Holy Writ is beyond all price, not so much because we could not do without it, as because it must gladden our hearts to know it can be adduced when required. Let us bless God for it; believing that He who appoints to everything a time and place; who reveals new spheres of

labour when they are needed; who unfolds fresh continents for the wants of overgrown empires; who discloses latent principles of science in proportion to the requisitions of enlightened civilization, has not commanded these demonstrations of the veracity of Scripture to spring up out of the earth, at the time when they were most wanted, *without cause*; and that a principal reason of their being brought to light in a day like our own, distinguished above all others for the electrical rapidity of its progress, is to provide us with a complete and satisfactory answer against doubt and distrust; to establish the fact that the evidences of Religion square with the most advanced powers of the understanding; and that the age of scientific discovery and elaborate research is not condemnatory, but substantive of the truth of God's Holy Word.

And here we leave the subject we have had awhile under consideration, and must bid farewell to ancient Nineveh. We might, it is true, have endeavoured to throw some light upon the history, customs, and habits of the Assyrians; but deeming the elucidation of the

Sacred Record the principal object of these lectures, we have sought to confine our remarks to those statements of Scripture which receive illustration from these valuable discoveries. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance we have derived from the writings of Mr. Layard and others, and make our modest apology for manifold imperfections, in the terms of the writer of the Maccabæan history. "And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto."

One thing, however, we shall have done—we shall have thrown down one more challenge to infidelity, and established one more proof of the truth of Scripture. Give me a spot, said the mathematician, on which I may place my foot, and I will raise the world. Give us a spot, we answer, on which we can prove that a part of God's word is true, and we can prove the whole. This is the real use of inquiries like the present: they do not merely embrace the subject of the great Assyrian capital, but the entire scope of Revelation.

They afford presumptive evidence that if the Bible is true in part, it must be true altogether, and that we need not shun to declare, nor you to receive, "the whole counsel of God." Take, then, your stand upon these mounds which cover the remains of time-honoured Nineveh. Place your feet upon the ruins of the buried city which for 3000 years did not see the light of day. Hold in your hands the Book of Jonah and the Prophecy of Nahum, and read the history of years gone by. Are you dealing with fiction or with fact? Do you listen to a fable and a dream, or to the word of the living God? Are you perusing the Arabian Night's Entertainment of some fairy tale, or real and substantial truth? Is the Bible the sleight and invention of men, or able to make wise unto salvation? Did prophets and seers of old utter mere ravings of frenzy and fanaticism, or did holy men speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Are some parts of the sacred Scriptures true, and others false? Is the tale of Jonah, Nahum, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, correct, but the Gospel which tells man of a blessed Redeemer, untrue? Have you

doubts still? Do you oscillate between conviction and distrust, like the weeping sisters at the grave of their beloved brother, now looking down into the sepulchre in the extreme naturalness of indecision betwixt hope and fear, and saying, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days;" and again, with reviving confidence, upwards to Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life," "I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God He will give it thee." Is not the fact that you stand upon the relics of lost Nineveh sufficient for the illumination of faith and the satisfaction of reasonable inquiry? What!—still sceptical—still unpersuaded! Then,

"Blind infidelity, turn pale and die."

"TAKE YE AWAY THE STONE;" open the vault; roll off the covering; unwrap the habiliments of the tomb, and suffer the skeleton form once more to look upon the blue sky and the clear light of heaven; let the rays of the eastern sun penetrate, as of yore, the halls of Nimrod, and illumine, with pristine glory, the palaces of Sennacherib. Evoke the shadowy

spirit of the gigantic city from its rest of ages, and bid it pass before your face, making your bones to shake, and the hair of your flesh stand up, as "in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men," and from the broken silence of that indistinct yet terrible image, let the voice of dead Nineveh, "yet speaking," pierce the inmost recesses of your being, proclaiming to the universe, in tones of mightier majesty than those with which she hushed the nations of the earth into submission, "Thy Word, O God, is Truth."

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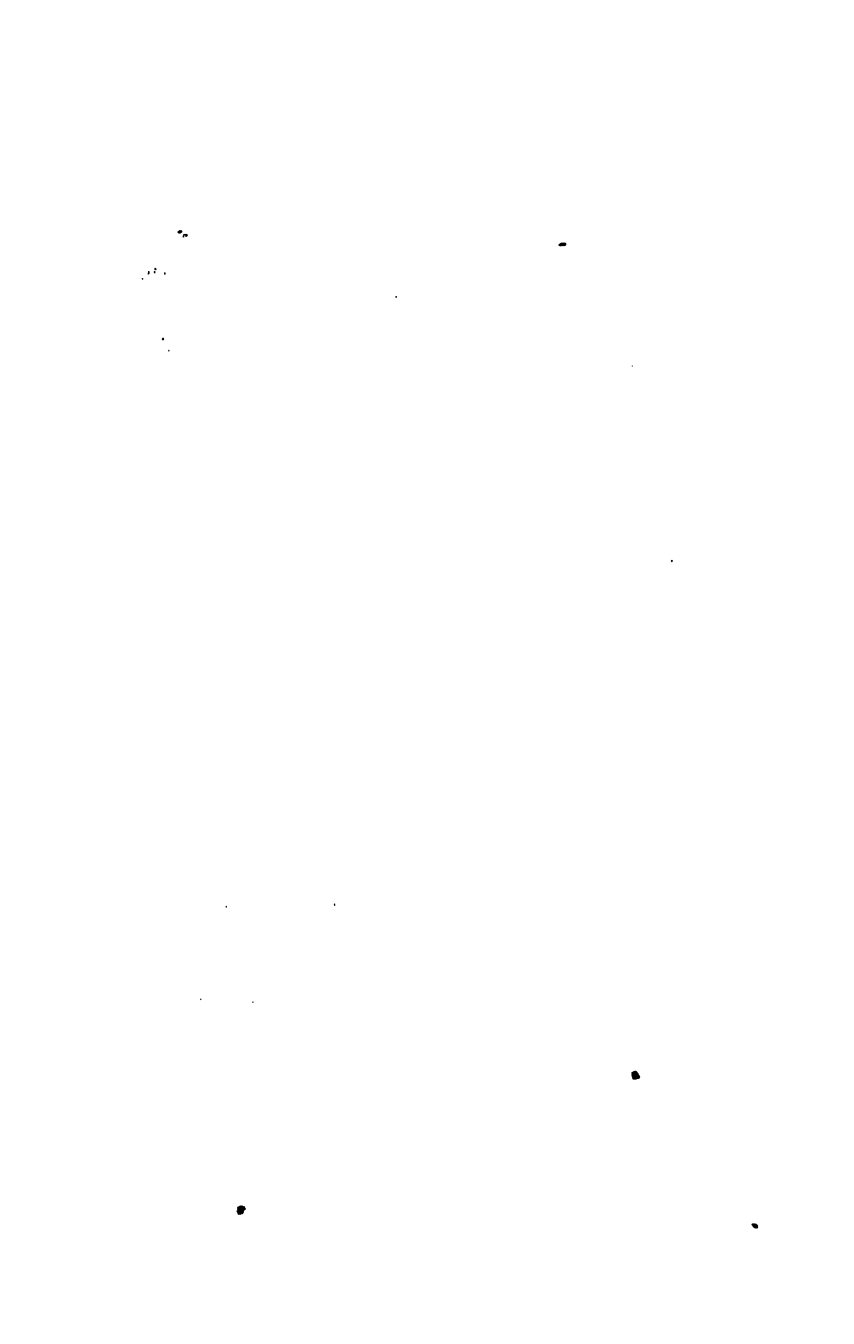
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